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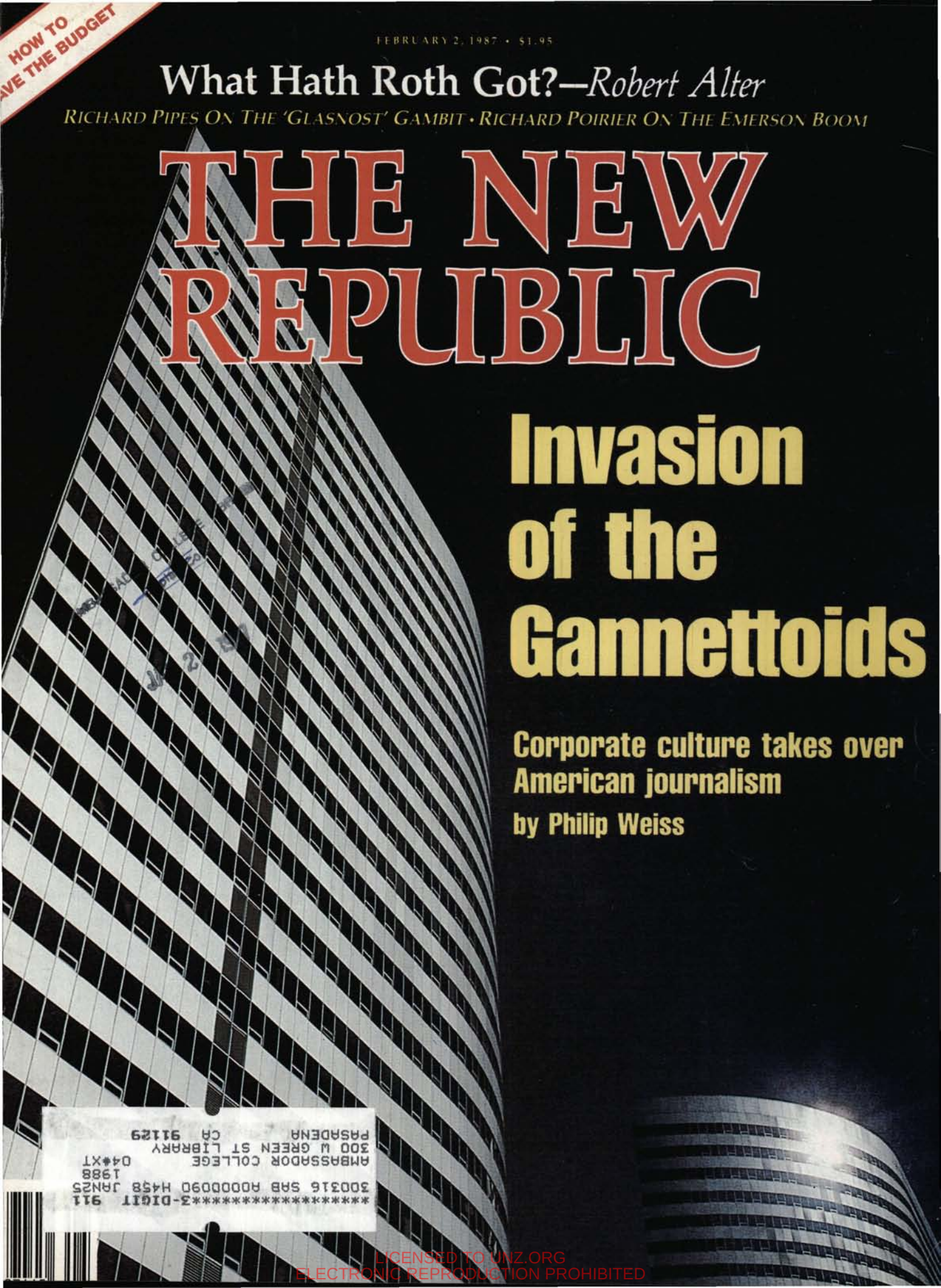
THE NEW REPUBLIC



Invasion of the Gannettoids

Corporate culture takes over American journalism

by Philip Weiss

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CORRESPONDENCE

RATS!

To the editors:
I wish Henry Fairlie would come to our farm and persuade our rats how preferable city life is to rural life ("The Idiocy of Urban Life," January 5 & 12). They don't read THE NEW REPUBLIC so they don't know. I lived in New York City for 30 years and I never saw a rat. Now that I live in the country (real country, not the suburbs, exurbs, or rurbs), I've learned what the rat race is. We have rats in the barn, in the stables, under the milking shed. I fight them with every device known to man—and they're winning. I read once that rats have one-third the intelligence of human beings. Our rats would outwit Henry Fairlie at every turn.

JOHN CROSBY
Esmont, Virginia

To the editors:
The "Idiocy of Rural Life" (December 8) was one of the most perceptive articles on rural life that I have read. First I thought it ironic that it appeared in a journal written by urbanites for urbanites. On further reflection, it is not surprising that an urbanite could so objectively portray farm life. Others most always see us better than we see ourselves.

I would suggest to you that the last observation is proven by the "Idiocy of Urban Life." Mr. Fairlie is obviously a denizen of the city. His article is cocktail party self-denigration, calculated to cleverly amuse but not to provoke any serious thought or evaluations. Therein lies the real idiocy of urban life and opportunistic liberals. They live in squalor and fear, too stupid or "gutless" to do anything to precipitate a change. Not to mention the city dweller who is afraid to walk the streets at night and some places by day; the effete who don't see the filth and decay; and the Brooks Brothers attired insouciant who feeds on inefficiency.

Rural people can read your article on rural life and learn. What we need is a similar one on the city.

CECIL J. BURROWS
Pittsfield, Illinois

SUPERPOWER PERILS

To the editors:
Charles Krauthammer is on target in arguing that the Iran arms affair "is not a Reagan crisis or a presidential crisis, but a recurring American crisis" ("Divided Superpower," December 22). Yet he misses the mark by claiming that the problem is rooted in America's unwillingness to assume the global responsibilities of a superpower.

The core of the problem is not whether we are or should be a great power, but to what end we should exercise our power. Few Americans would wish to abolish our predominant military and economic position in the Western world. Yet few would agree on what our national interests are, especially in the Third World. Should the United States defend only the key military/industrial centers of the world, as George Kennan suggested in his original version of containment? Or should we fight communism and anti-Americanism wherever it may appear?

Krauthammer assumes—erroneously—that America has objective responsibilities as a superpower. But just what are those responsibilities in places like Iran, Nicaragua, and Vietnam? The crux of the postwar foreign policy debate has really been about clarifying America's national interests around the globe, not about how to defend them.

CHARLES KUPCHAN
Department of Politics
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

To the editors:
Charles Krauthammer underscores a persistent dilemma when he wonders if the United States can fulfill superpower responsibilities in a competent manner. Unfortunately, the thrust of his inquiry is whether America's democratic system can be transformed to accommodate the nation's global role. A more pertinent question is whether the United States can continue employing the amoral tactics necessary to play that role without doing irreparable damage to our democratic system and the values sustaining it.

Nearly four decades ago, opponents of foreign entanglements cautioned that America could not operate as an empire abroad and remain a republic at home. This warning expressed at the dawn of the cold war was prophetic. Our ongoing Iran scandal is merely the latest evidence. Burdensome military taxation, the malignant growth of an imperial presidency, and the violations of civil liberties during the McCarthy era and the Vietnam War offered earlier testimony to the dangers arising from America's status as planetary gendarme.

Krauthammer speculates that the "bipartisan internationalism" of the first two postwar decades, and not the subsequent "Vietnam syndrome," may constitute the real aberration in this country's approach to world affairs. One certainly hopes so. The "bipartisan era" was characterized by a catatonic passivity on the part of Congress and the American people concerning depredations committed in the name of defending the "free world." A return to that interventionist consensus would menace the future of individual liberty.

TED GALEN CARPENTER
Foreign Policy Analyst, Cato Institute
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:
Charles Krauthammer's article is flawed by the following sentence: "One cannot sacrifice the rule of democracy in pursuit of even the most obvious and disinterested national objective."

"The rule of democracy" can and must be (temporarily) sacrificed under the conditions and circumstances so requiring—as in Franklin Roosevelt's temporary assumption of power as the new Cincinnatus, to be renounced when the emergency was over. Krauthammer's general statement therefore requires not only exceptions but also qualifications, distinctions, and the application of the doctrine of necessity so as to strike some balance between democratic principles and procedures on the one hand, and today's requirements on the other hand.

MORRIS D. FORKOSCH
New York, New York

AT WHAT PRICE FAME?

To the editors:
I was appalled by Morton Kondracke's inadvertent (I hope) slur on this fine eatery. In "Out of the Basement" (January 5 & 12), he quoted a National Security Council staffer, exulting over a rumor that Qaddafi had been killed in the U.S. raid on Libya, as promising to buy everyone lunch—"and not at The Exchange." Kondracke felt compelled to

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FROM WASHINGTON

One Thing Is Certain

Nineteen eighty-six. It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Specifically, it was the best and worst of times for the U.S. League of Savings Institutions (according to *American Banker*), for the Los Angeles Raiders (said the *Los Angeles Times*), for the pop group Run-D.M.C. (asserted the *Washington Post*), and for traffic around New York (noted that city's *Times*). My friend Nexis, the computerized news media data base, reports that it was the best of times and the worst of times no fewer than 47 times in major American newspapers and magazines during 1986.

Before exploring new ground, here's an update on our Nexis findings of a year ago in this space ("No Easy Answers," TNR, February 3, 1986). There were "no easy answers" on 104 issues in 1986, up only slightly from an even 100 in 1985. The last half dozen of the year were teenage pregnancy (twice), how to retrain unemployed workers, "the right time to sell a stock," how to save General Motors, and "why Thoreau moved into his hut." Meanwhile, "vital questions" were piling up fast—77 in 1986, a 28 percent increase from 1985. These ranged from "where to strike a balance between . . . prosperity and preserving [the] environment" to "Does real Texas chili have beans?"

Despite the increase in vital questions, consultations with "thoughtful observers" plummeted from 13 in 1985 to only seven last year (including one who isn't much good since, despite his thoughtfulness, he "continues to deny the obvious.") It's no wonder, therefore, that literally thousands of matters "remain to be seen"—75 new ones in December alone, including the future of OPEC, whether an opera singer named Faith Esham can cure her "lack of dynamic variety," and the popular appeal of a new issue of debentures in Yugoslavia.

In such an uncertain world, it is reassuring to know that "one thing is certain." This we were told 234 times in 1986. The degree of certainty in our society is holding remarkably constant: one thing was certain 224 times in 1985. Alas, the one thing that is certain keeps changing. Is it that "the demand for lumber is higher in July than it is in March"? Is it that "Ohio courts . . . will be writing some interesting new chapters in corporate law"? Or that "home shopping has already achieved the status of a cultural phenomenon"? Or that CBS programmers "are not going to lie down and play dead"? Those are some of December's highlights, along with my favorite: "Whatever Congress finally decides, one thing is certain: someone will not be happy" (*Los Angeles Times*).

"The buck" was a veritable milk train in 1985: it stopped 90 times—here, there, and everywhere. Buck stops increased toward the end of the year, with the Iranamok scandal—15 stops in December alone. Seven of these stops were with the president, naturally, but other buck stoppers ranged from the captain of a submarine to one Ernie Schneider, head of the Orange County (California) Environmental Management Agency. Isn't it great to live in a country where the buck stops in so many places? Maybe not. In Japan, according to the prestigious journal *Foreign Affairs*, "there is no place where . . . the buck stops." Wouldn't you know that in Japan even the buck never stops.

But in America, we've sure got the "right stuff." In fact, we had it 258 times last year, not even counting puns (Write Stuff, Wright Stuff, Rite Stuff, Right Stuffing). References to "the right stuff" are accumulating so fast that Nexis informed me several had been added during the few minutes it took to conduct my search. Among those who either did or did not have the right stuff in just the last few weeks of 1986 were the Voyager pilots (fair enough), any number of professional athletes, America's middle-level managers, America's chefs, America's stockbrokers, and a software program called "Perspective." In the latter case, "the right stuff" includes "a sturdy box, spiral binding, complete table of contents and index."

With all this buck stopping and right stuffing, it might seem hard to concen-

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The challenge of prodigies.

"To read Feldman's sympathetic and sensitive accounts of these six children is to feel the same kind of awe which the young Mozart must have inspired."
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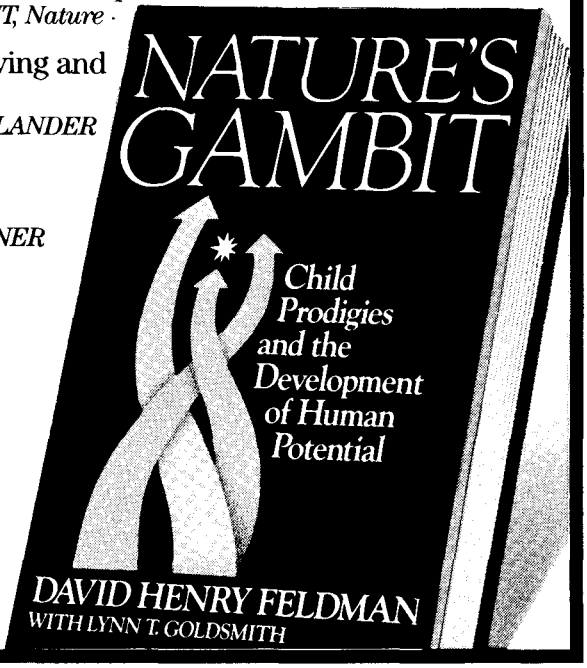

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
FEBRUARY 2, 1987

SPENDING SMARTER

Ronald Reagan's experiment in small government has created a federal monster that is bigger and dumber than ever. Federal spending is a larger percentage of GNP than it was in 1980. It is skewed to a handful of expensive endeavors that benefit people who don't need help and that don't enhance the productivity of the economy: namely, defense, Social Security, farm subsidies, and interest on the national debt. Taxes, meanwhile, actually were at the same share of GNP in 1986 (18.5 percent) as they were under Carter. The only difference is that government raises more of its money regressively, through the Social Security payroll tax. The deficit, meanwhile, is so huge, and so heavily financed from abroad, that federal intrusions into the private sector are more threatening to economic growth than they were before Reagan.

How did we get here? Reagan's demogoguery on the subject of taxes has ruled out a revenue increase. And Congress, especially the Democrats, has bullied him into swearing off any cuts in entitlement programs, such as Social Security, that benefit middle-class voters. Gramm-Rudman's deficit targets, enforced by the threat of automatic spending cuts, were supposed to end this standoff by making Reagan accede to a tax hike. It did get him to acquiesce to two straight years of lower defense budgets. But the president didn't blink on taxes—and Congress hasn't given in on entitlements.

Now the government is stalemated. As long as taxes aren't raised and entitlements aren't cut, the government will be unable to launch necessary new spending initiatives without adding to the federal debt. Unless one assumes that the current spending priorities are going to be adequate for the foreseeable future, this can only mean that government will no longer be able to respond to the needs of its citizens.

In the administration's proposed budget for fiscal year 1988, it insists that deficit targets be met solely through spending cuts, without new taxes. Yet it could only muster a $42 billion savings package. Less than half of that consists of cuts in domestic spending—many of them in programs for the poor that have already been cut to the bone. The rest comes from higher user fees for federal services and sales of federal assets.

In the president's opinion, the principal new needs are the Strategic Defense Initiative and other national defense programs. Thus his budget asks for a three percent real increase in defense spending. But even Reagan has to admit that domestic problems demand more federal attention too—AIDS research, air traffic control, worker retraining. The contradictions in his own proposals underscore this fact. The president wants to cut child nutrition and Medicaid for the poor. At the same time, he wants a new program to combat growing infant mortality. Recognizing that the American economy is losing its technological edge to foreign competitors, he wants to spend more on scientific research. Yet he also wants to cut scholarships for the needy.

Even $42 billion in savings probably isn't enough to meet Gramm-Rudman's $108 billion deficit target for fiscal '88. The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office, whose projections are usually more reliable than those

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from the White House, says it would really take $61 billion. The administration itself concedes that its plan wouldn't meet Gramm-Rudman targets after next year. Its only defense is that the budget deficit would fall to 2.3 percent of GNP by 1988, and to zero by the early 1990s—thanks to steady economic growth.

This would be fine, if it really happened. Two-and-a-half percent of GNP is the level of deficit spending the American economy has historically been able to tolerate. The problem for the rest of the decade and beyond, however, is that another recession is likely in the next five years. We need a serious plan to keep deficits within reason even if the economy goes sour. At a minimum, that plan would include the following four points.

Raise revenues. This is a rich country. We can afford as much government as we have now. We could easily afford even more. There is a deficit for the simple reason that the American people have not been asked to pay for the amount of government their elected representatives have chosen.

The government could raise $50 billion with a 50-cent-per-gallon gasoline tax. This would not be an unbearable sacrifice for anyone. Gas prices have actually *declined* 36 percent in real terms since Reagan took office. Raising them by 50 cents a gallon would simply restore prices to what they were in 1980. It would also drive down demand for imported oil. That would have the additional salutary effect of making it more difficult for OPEC to impose its latest increase in the price of oil.

MEANWHILE, there are still more loopholes to close. One way to raise a quick five billion or so is by taxing capital gains at death. Current law allows the entire increase in the value of a stock during the life of its original owner to go untaxed; whoever inherits the stock only has to pay tax on the amount it increased in value since he inherited it. This special break, which has no economic justification, is enjoyed almost exclusively by the rich.

Take on entitlements. If Reagan is willing to bite the bullet on taxes, the Democrats should take the lead in trimming middle-class entitlements programs. Democrats defend Social Security and farm subsidies as crown jewels of the New Deal. Just as the president has unfairly charged that the Democrats are only out to raise taxes, so have the Democrats scored cheap political points by accusing Reagan of being out to get family farmers and the elderly. But both farm subsidies and Social Security now confer much of their benefits on the relatively prosperous—at the expense of the needy. If Social Security is left untouched again this year, the program's cost will rise from $208 billion to $220 billion. By and large, the elderly are not poor. Their average per capita income is 15 percent higher than that of the general population. Furthermore, Social Security benefits are financed by a payroll tax that falls most heavily on the poorest members of our society. Taxing Social Security benefits like ordinary income would save billions of dollars without hurting the elderly poor.

Farm subsidies cost taxpayers $25 billion this year. Every non-farm family paid $415 in taxes to support farmers' incomes, not counting how much they paid in higher food prices. In 1985 almost 70 percent of these handouts went to farmers with annual sales of over $100,000. And in 1986, 50 of the largest rice producers received subsidies of over $1 million each. The president proposes trimming this giveaway by a mere $3.7 billion next year, to $21.3 billion. He would gradually reduce the programs to about half their present size by 1992. This is too lenient for a program that so blatantly takes from those with less to give to those with more. Farm supports should be phased out completely over the next five years.

Prune national defense. The administration's request for a three percent after-inflation increase in defense spending is the lowest it has ever made. The Pentagon seems somewhat chastened by the cuts in the defense budget that Congress imposed in the last two years. Yet the administration still has the gall to ask for $18.8 billion for military pensions. These benefits are three times more generous than comparable private sector pensions. Over 60 percent of the recipients are in the top fifth of the income scale. The Pentagon says high pensions help recruit and retain qualified personnel. In fact, they encourage officers to retire in mid-career and cash in early, depriving the military of seasoned veterans.

BUDGETARY PRESSURES heighten the urgency of making hard choices about which strategic forces to build. The most pressing choice is about our land-based missile forces. President Reagan wants to spend $1.9 billion next year on a multiple-warhead mobile missile—the MX. He also wants $2.3 billion for a small, single-warhead mobile missile—the Midgetman. Strategically, it doesn't make sense to go for both the MX and the Midgetman. As an offensive weapon, the Midgetman can strike precisely the sort of "hard" targets the MX can (though more Midgetmen would be necessary, since each carries only one or two warheads). As targets, the Midgetman and the MX are both invulnerable. The mobile Midgetman is the nightmare of Soviet planners. (As the mobile missiles now rolling off their lines in the Soviet Union are the nightmare of American planners.) We see no reason, in a deficit-desperate age, for strategic redundancy. The Midgetman is a wise weapon. The MX is a weapon whose time has come and gone.

Wipe out corporate welfare. The Export-Import Bank (a one-billion-dollar item in the current budget), the Small Business Administration ($934 million), and Urban Development Action Grants ($225 million) were all created for the noble purposes of economic development and job creation. They have long since become pots of federal gravy that members of Congress dish out to win favor back home. Government subsidies to favored members of the private sector arbitrarily divert resources that could be used productively elsewhere. The jobs they create in one place they destroy somewhere else. Not only is this unfair,

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but it reduces the efficiency of the economy as a whole.

One of the few strong points of the administration's budget policy has been its efforts to eliminate such subsidies. Generally this year's budget keeps up the opposition. But the longer Reagan stays in Washington, the weaker his resolve to defend free market principles gets. The most egregious case is that of the SBA. Last year the administration said the SBA should be eliminated. But it has since caved in to pressure from the small business lobby (see "Free Lunch Fans" by Fred Barnes, June 30, 1986). Reagan's appointment of former Senator James Abdnor of South Dakota as the agency's new administrator completes the SBA's transformation from a drain on the treasury to a jobs program for down-on-their-luck Republicans.

The administration bills this year's attack on subsidies as "privatization." Reagan wants to raise $9.6 billion by selling off government assets—from Amtrak to federal helium facilities to the Teapot Dome Naval Petroleum Reserve. There is nothing wrong with privatization in principle. Government need not take losses running businesses for which there isn't sufficient private demand. But as a means of reducing the deficit, it's basically a gimmick. The government can't command much of a price when it announces in advance it's desperate to sell. Furthermore, not all government ventures are money-losers. The sales of federal assets produce savings in the short run only; the government forfeits whatever income those assets would have generated if it had held on to them over the long run.

The proposal to raise user fees by $3.2 billion is also not a serious deficit reduction idea. As a matter of economic principle, however, it's perfectly sound. Those who use federal services should pay a price that reflects their cost. The problem is that the administration doesn't apply its principle across the board. It would charge recreational boaters $355 million for Coast Guard services—eliminating an annoying subsidy from taxpayers to yachtsmen. But it wouldn't charge corporate jets for air traffic control services. The tab is now paid out of general revenues and by the tax on airline tickets. Charging private flyers would save taxpayers about $400 million.

WHAT'S OUR bottom line? Fifty-five billion dollars from raising the gas tax and closing loopholes—plus higher user fees and cuts in corporate welfare—would yield just about enough money to bring the deficit down to next year's $108 billion target. And there'd still be plenty of money left, thanks to savings in farm programs, Social Security, and defense. In the interest of fairness, we could use half of these proceeds to pay for a reduction in the regressive payroll tax, and to shore up spending on the hardest-hit programs for the poor. The rest of the savings could be put to use making America more productive—by investing it in research, job training, education, and infrastructure. We can have a government that pays its own way, distributes benefits more fairly, and promotes prosperity. It really isn't all that difficult.

ASPIN'S SCALP

In recent years the Democratic Party has gone through some rather ostentatious rethinking and self-searching on foreign policy, trying to distance itself from its McGovernite past without embracing Reagan. Much of the rethinking, such as the tough talk of some presidential candidates, has been only talk. But some Democrats—Al Gore and Sam Nunn in the Senate, for example, and Les Aspin in the House—have done real work and given the party the hope of being able to structure a foreign policy that will both serve the country abroad and win votes at home. Foreign policy has not been a strong point for Democrats in the last several elections.

Which is why the recent action of House Democrats voting to depose Aspin as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee is so dismaying. Part of the anti-Aspin feeling is no doubt related to charges about personality conflicts, about inattention to colleagues, and about untrustworthiness (on the MX). Aspin is also charged with insufficient zeal in fighting for the House figure in the House-Senate conference on the defense authorization bill.

But it is clear that the main issue is ideological. On the MX, Aspin worked very hard for the Scowcroft Commission compromise, which proposed a scaled-back MX as a bridge to the new mobile missile, the Midgetman. The Scowcroft compromise was the best answer to the MX debate, and was a serious attempt to face the problem of the vulnerability of America's land-based missiles. Aspin did not hew to the orthodox Democratic Party line (post-Carter) of unflinching opposition to the MX.

Aspin's colleagues were even more enraged by his vote on that other Democratic totem, opposition to the *contras* in Nicaragua. In 1986 Aspin voted in favor of military assistance. Whom does the House leadership support to replace Aspin? Another member of the the Armed Services Committee, Charlie Bennett. Now, Bennett also supported *contra* aid. So did the other leading challenger for Aspin's job, Marvin Leath. But they have an excuse. Leath is from Texas and Bennett is from Florida. They—like liberals Dante Fascell and Claude Pepper, who have Cubans in their districts—can be forgiven for voting the wrong way on the *contras*. Southern Democrats can always plead electoral necessity. Aspin has no such excuse. His district has no Cubans and he is from Wisconsin. The only explanation of his *contra* vote is that he voted his conscience, something not to be forgiven.

Aspin has been deposed, but he is still a candidate in the open election to the post. If he is denied re-election, it will be a sign that the Democratic Party cannot tolerate even the most principled deviation from its isolationist orthodoxy. That will be unfortunate not just for Democrats, who will undoubtedly pay for this at the polls, but for the American political system, which needs an opposition party (and, perhaps in 1988, a ruling party) whose defense policy is not hostage to the party's pacifist wing. □

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NOTEBOOK

□ STRANGER THAN FICTION DEPARTMENT: On January 9 Nicaraguan president Daniel Ortega inaugurated the constitution by suspending it. Hours after signing the new charter, he renewed emergency decrees suppressing Nicaraguans' civil rights. What's left of the local working press was not disposed to register the ironies. Editors of *La Prensa*, the only non-government news outlet, announced that the renewed state of emergency had forced it to abandon hopes of resuming publication. So no one reported that state security broke into a print-shop in Managua, arrested the printer, and seized 10,000 posters depicting Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, *La Prensa*'s beloved editor, whose murder set off the popular insurrections that brought the Sandinistas to power. The constitution promises (as the Sandinistas did before coming to power) a "mixed economy, pluralism, and non-alignment." The Sandinistas know that such language will be useful to members of Congress now searching for arguments to justify cutting off aid to the *contras*. The constitution also sports the gloss that was applied at New York University last April by American liberal and leftist jurists. Yet it is hardly a liberal document. The Nicaraguan army is the armed wing of the Sandinista party; the Congress cannot draw up the budget or even discuss national defense. Alone among Latin American democrats, Peru's fiery young president, Alan Garcia, attended the constitutional ceremony. Apparently without irony, he praised the government for its "audacity" in approving a document "that says that everyone has the right to publish their ideas and intentions in the media without prior censorship. . . ." That day 2,000 Managuans protested, commemorating Chamorro's death and that of a labor leader killed by Somoza. They marched without police permission, and without their impounded posters, which quoted Chamorro's famous slogan: "Without press freedom, there is no freedom."

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	**AFTER THE FALL GUYS**	4	11

Iranamok. White House efforts to position itself in advance of congressional hearings have become an orgy of scapegoating, with one-time friends like Israel and Oliver North blamed for the Iran "policy" that Reagan supposedly knew nothing about. The spotlight is returning to North, now a pariah.

2.	**HOMES FROM THE HILL**	2	2

Budget cum compassion. Speaker Wright has put compassion into play in a major way, supporting a half-billion dollar proposal for the nation's homeless and taking a well-publicized tour of a D.C. shelter. Compassion issues derive their strength from middle-class guilt, which is once again ascendant.

3.	**FUTURE SPOCK**	8	2

Surrogate motherhood. Whatever the ethics of the Stern-Whitehead motherhood case, U.S. approval of "surrogatism" is rising dramatically (with 68 percent of the under-30 generation now approving). This is a model of changes in values: people willingly accept new practices, but for "traditional" reasons, in this case empathy for the pitiable barren.

4.	**2005: A STOCK ODYSSEY**	—	1

Wall Street. "Fresh money"? Low interest rates? Computerization? The Dow Jones tops 2000 in the midst of an apparently laggard economy, and as usual, nobody has a clue. Galbraith gets attention by invoking the 1929 parallel, a "bad news" angle that has already worked its way down to cartoons.

5.	**DOCTORED ZHIVAGO**	1	3

Glasnost. The now-typical week's worth of Soviet reform stories (Pasternak's resuscitation, heavy metal's heyday) lead even some conservatives to think that Gorbachev is going well beyond public relations.

6.	**HIGH CAMP**	*	5

AIDS. While another potential AIDS drug is on the front pages, the real story remains in the back of the smaller journals. *American Spectator* is the most recent intellectual venue for discussing mandatory AIDS isolation camps. Even some gay spokesmen suggest that camps are where the national mood is heading as the disease spreads.

7.	**TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES**	—	1

Gas. The attempt to revitalize OPEC, coupled with suggestions that the U.S. drop fuel efficiency standards, has returned gas consumption to attention. Though prices are creeping up, the U.S. currently seems indifferent to its consumption levels; purchases are high, and midsize cars are selling well, with "prestige" much more prominent than fuel economy.

8.	**ON THE REBOUND**	—	1

Soviet returnees. The return of some 50 Soviets to the U.S.S.R. demolishes a whole library of cultural tenets. In fact, many immigrants who delight in the freedom here find the commercialism and social isolation highly oppressive, an angle unaddressed in coverage of this politicized mini-exodus.

9.	**JUST SAY NO FUNDS**	7	9

Reagan cum drugs. Critics hooting at Reagan's proposed cutback in anti-drug funding is yet another sign of new times a-coming, as is the announcement of a new high-budget TV show that takes place in the White House. It's a sitcom.

10.	**BEEFING UP**	—	1

Food. The beef industry chose the annual post-holiday season of weight watching to push beef hard with a $30 million campaign that is not merely pro-burgers and steaks but decidedly anti-nouvelle and anti-elitist. Beef is "Real Food for Real People." Pass the ketchup, yuppies.

*Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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□ SLEAZEBALL WATCH: "I am not a crook" is a perennial if unpersuasive defense for Washington malefactors. James Jones, the Oklahoma representative who lost a bid for the Senate last November, has come up with a new variation: "I am not a lobbyist." "As a former Budget Committee chairman and an influential member of the Ways and Means Committee, which writes tax legislation," the *New York Times* reports, "[Jones] is being eagerly sought by several investment bankers and two dozen law firms." Presumably these people are less interested in Jones's legal experience (four years' practice in Tulsa) than in his Capitol Hill connections. Jones speaks approvingly of the "entrepreneurial spirit in the practice of law today that deals with a whole range of problems and goes directly to public policy issues." And he looks forward to "doing legislative law work, counseling, briefs, presentations, and things like that because it is an area in which I have experience and credibility. But," he insisted to the *Times*, "I will not be a lobbyist."

□ REAGAN DENIES THE CHARGE:

Lies by Government Are Disliked

—*New York Times*, October 31, 1986

□ THE CONTEST THAT WOULDN'T DIE: The December 15 deadline for our "Name That Scandal" contest has long since passed, but more than 200 new entries have poured in. Our panel of judges continues to be amazed by their scope and creativity. At least six more readers proposed "Iranamok" or "Iranamuck," giving a democratic vote of confidence to the contest-winning phrase. The major media, for some reason, are still resisting. The *New York Times* seems to have settled on the unimaginative "the Iran arms controversy." The *Washington Post*, in its daily index, simply refers to the scandal as "The Deal." But elsewhere there are signs that "Iranamok" is catching on. A columnist in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* is using it, and Gary Robinson of Berkeley, California, reports that he heard it on a local television station. Spread the word.

SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

BEES DID IT

HONEYBEES OCCASIONALLY take what are called "cleansing flights." Thousands of the creatures leave their hive together and, often at altitudes too high to be seen from the ground, defecate in unison. Back on earth there is a shower of—you guessed it—yellow rain. In the northeastern United States and other temperate regions, the bees take cleansing flights only in early spring after they have been cooped up all winter. Until recently, entomologists had assumed that in tropical places such as Southeast Asia bees never took cleansing flights. The scientists' realization that they were wrong has turned out to be a major contribution to U.S. arms control policy.

Nevertheless, the Reagan administration continues to insist that yellow rain comes from communist airplanes, not bees. Last September, at a meeting of signatories to a 1972 convention that bans chemical and biological warfare, U.S. Ambassador Donald Lowitz charged that the Soviet Union "has been involved in the production and use of toxins for hostile purposes in Laos, Kampuchea, and Afghanistan."

Professor Matthew Meselson of Harvard, who served as a consultant to government agencies on chemical and biological warfare, assumed the role of chief skeptic about yellow rain almost as soon as the administration charged the Soviets with dropping it. He is adamant: "I don't know of a single sample, from the very first ones given to the United States in 1979 to the most recent ones, that has been shown to be anything other than . . . the droppings of honeybees."

"That's nonsense," replies John Hawes, the principal deputy secretary of state for political-military affairs. "People died in Southeast Asia and people died in Afghanistan of this stuff. We have a very clear set of evidence which, for some reason, people wish to keep picking apart."

THE YELLOW RAIN story originated in the late 1970s, when refugees, mostly Hmong tribesmen, arriving at refugee camps in Thailand told of a yellow substance sprayed from the sky that killed people and made others sick with vomiting, diarrhea, and bleeding. The Hmong, our allies in the Vietnam War, could well have been targets of a terror campaign by the Vietnamese troops fighting in Laos and Kampuchea. So many refugees, arriving from different places, told the stories that they seemed quite believable. The difficulty was that often the refugees described events that had occurred months or even years before in remote and inaccessible areas.

In 1981 a journalist named Sterling Seagrave completed a book called *Yellow Rain*. He concluded that "the Hmong were being wiped out with a chemical compound," and he speculated, but by no means proved, that the chemicals were something called T-2 or other types of tricothecenes, natural products of certain molds that can be highly toxic. Shortly after Seagrave's book was published, the U.S. government had samples of the yellow substance from alleged attack sites analyzed by a laboratory at the University of Minnesota. Tests there found trace amounts of tricothecenes. Very soon after that, in September 1981, Alexander Haig, who was then secretary of state, accused the Soviets of employing chemical warfare in Southeast Asia. Later the administration obtained a Soviet gas mask from Afghanistan with a suspect yellow spot, and concluded that the same tactics were being used

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against the Moslem rebels.

Haig's successor, George Shultz, repeated the charges, as did the president himself in a speech to the United Nations in 1983. Yellow rain became one of the administration's best examples of perfidy by the "evil empire," proof that the Soviets cared little for the arms control agreements they signed.

THE PROBLEM, as many skeptical scientists pointed out, was that tricothecenes occur widely in nature, and the laboratories could have been measuring something that grows naturally in the area or that contaminated the sample before it reached the laboratory. The administration argued that the particular types of toxins found in the samples did not occur in the region. Biologists knew, however, that those types could be found in parts of India with a climate similar to Southeast Asia, and they also knew that the flora and fauna of that part of the world had been studied so little that many things grow there without our knowledge.

In early 1982 Thai, British, and Canadian scientists looked at samples under microscopes (something the American scientists seemed to have neglected). They discovered that every one consisted mostly of grains of pollen. At first U.S. government scientists explained this observation by suggesting that the pollen was some sort of binding agent added by the Soviets. But at a conference organized by Meselson and others in 1983, Thomas Seeley, an expert on honeybees from Yale, suggested that yellow rain was nothing more than bee feces. It took a honeybee specialist to know that pollen grains pass intact through a bee's digestive system.

Insect specialists had believed that the cleansing flights occurred only in the spring, after the bees emerged from a winter in their hive. The scientists also assumed that bees in the tropics never took such flights. They were wrong. In 1984 Seeley and Meselson traveled to Thailand, where they observed lots of yellow blotches near beehives. They actually found themselves in a shower of yellow rain from a swarm too high to be seen. Talking to residents of the area, the two scientists learned that the yellow showers had been falling for as long as most people could remember. In 1965 the Cambodian ambassador to the United Nations went before the Security Council to accuse the United States of spraying toxic yellow powders on Cambodian villages and killing 76 people. The United States denied the charges.

Seeley and Meselson also visited refugee camps and concluded that the refugees' stories of death and illness were suspect, perhaps the result of hysteria or exhaustion. "In general," Meselson recalls, "the refugees knew that the Westerners, usually Americans, were coming to ask about chemical warfare. And they knew what the interviewers wanted to hear. In general, no cross-checks were done—that is, to find refugees from the same village but who didn't know what the first group had said, to see if you get the same story from a different group."

Another part of the administration's case for yellow rain has also been called into question. Early in 1986 the British and Canadian governments released studies on yellow rain. The British Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down analyzed large numbers of samples of yellow rain and found no tricothecenes. Canadian researchers looked at blood samples from 280 people in Thailand, some refugees, some not. The Canadians did find tricothecenes in some of the blood, but there was no relationship between the presence of the chemicals and whether a person had been in a battle zone. Those results suggested that contamination occurs naturally, perhaps as the result of eating moldy food.

Deputy Secretary of State Hawes remains unpersuaded. There were, he says, chemical warfare attacks in Southeast Asia. "It's a horrible thing to say," he told me, "but they may in fact have been Soviet test programs of new agents in conflict situations" where international reporting of any kind was limited. Hawes acknowledges that every sample of yellow rain contains pollen. Why? "I have no idea how the Soviets produce this stuff. We've not been in their factory." He says that the strongest evidence for yellow rain comes from intelligence sources. "That's a difficult problem for public explanation," he said, "because obviously we do not wish to open up intelligence sources and methods, and we simply will not do so."

MESELSON BELIEVES that the U.S. government jumped at conclusions that may have seemed logical but were not proven, and has been unable ever since to admit the error. "I think in the long run it would do us a lot of good to admit that this was a mistake. After all, we don't believe in yellow rain as a value. It's not like freedom. It's not like self-determination. And if our government were to announce that it was a scientific error, I think we would earn the immediate respect of people we care about all over the world. Because it's only very few governments on this planet which can admit error. Generally tyrannies cannot do that."

If the administration has a better case that yellow rain was indeed chemical warfare, it should try to present it. Chemical warfare is a threat not because we or the Soviet Union are likely to use it. The real danger is that chemical weapons could give poorer countries or even political movements the tools for mass killing. There is little question, for example, that Iraq is showering Iranian troops with poisonous gas. The United States and European countries still remember the horror of Ypres, but many other countries have no such conscience. Restricting chemical weapons is a goal we can work toward without any threat to our security. If inaccurate scientific conclusions about yellow rain are keeping us from that goal, it is truly a shame.

ROBERT BAZELL

Robert Bazell is the science correspondent for NBC News.

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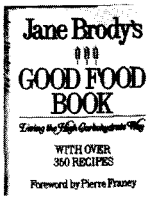

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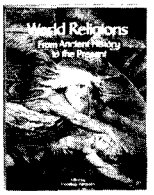

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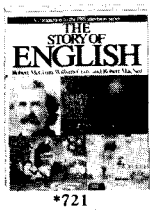

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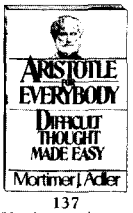

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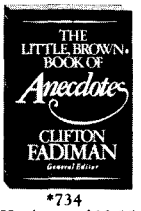

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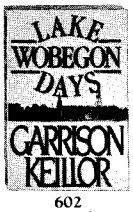

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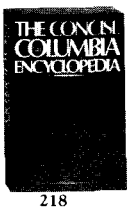

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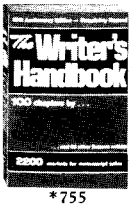

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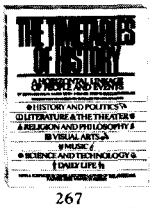

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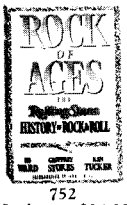

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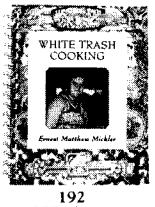

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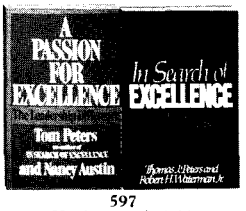

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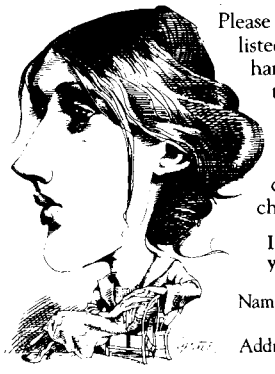

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PAY DIRT

DONALD T. REGAN is publicly invisible as White House chief of staff. He hasn't given a television or print interview since November. But invisibility—"the non-interview approach," Larry Speakes calls it—has served him well. The pressure for his ouster, so great in November and December, has eased. And he's in full control again. If you doubt this, check out the designated successor to Speakes as chief White House spokesman. Nancy Reagan touted Sheila Tate, her old press secretary and a talented pro in political p.r., for the job. But a back channel from the West Wing to the First Lady, who's no fan of Regan, was hardly what Regan had in mind. He prevailed on the president to pick Marlin Fitzwater, Vice President Bush's press secretary and before that a loyal Regan hand at the Treasury Department. Reagan scarcely knows Fitzwater. No matter. Regan does.

There's better evidence yet of Regan's revival. He managed to pare to a minimum the pay raise that Reagan recommended to Congress on January 5 for Cabinet secretaries, federal judges, senators, and House members. This may seem like no big deal, but don't be fooled. Regan had to overcome large obstacles, starting with the president. Lobbied heavily by Attorney General Edwin Meese III, Reagan favored a substantial pay hike for judges, which meant for parity's sake that one would have to go to members of Congress and the Cabinet too. Regan turned him around on this. He also thwarted the majority of the Cabinet (all but Energy Secretary John Herrington and Education Secretary William Bennett thought a big salary increase was in order). And he went against the wishes of Democratic and Republican leaders in the Congress, who wanted more of a raise than was recommended.

Regan also beat the system. As never before, the skids were greased for a big salary boost. Since the Federal Salary Act became law in 1967, pay recommendations have gone through a panel called the Quadrennial Commission on Executive, Legislative and Judicial Salaries. It's known as the Quad Commission, not the QCELJS. Six times it has urged pay increases. The president can accept, reject, or modify the commission's proposal, then dispatch it to Congress, which until this year had to vote affirmatively if the hike was to go into effect. Knowing the public's distaste for government pay increases, Congress has often balked at doing this (see "The Lost Amendment," page 13). And the result was the legislative veto of pay proposals. Then, in 1985, the Supreme Court struck down the legislative veto. To accommodate the ruling and make things politically easier, a clever amendment was attached to the budget resolution in 1985. It said the pay recommendation had to be issued along with the budget on January 5 and that Congress had 30 days to act or salaries would automatically rise. The time frame is important: Congress is normally in recess in January, so the chances for a negative vote are slim.

That wasn't all the grease to the skids. In December the Quad Commission offered a new salary scale. Cabinet secretaries would shoot up to $160,000 from $88,800, members of Congress to $135,000 from $77,400, and federal district judges to $130,000 from $81,800—pretty hefty raises of some 60 percent to 80 percent. Moreover, commission members, a group of corporate officials, and Washington lawyers Michael Horowitz (a former Reagan aide) and Kenneth Feinberg (a former staffer for Senator Teddy Kennedy) drummed up support for the new pay scale. Editorials soon appeared endorsing the proposal, especially for judges, in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Washington Post*. Common Cause, the National Association of Manufacturers, the American Bar Association, AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland, and former House Speaker Tip O'Neill added their support.

Reagan and his Cabinet agreed with them. At the Cabinet meeting on December 16, Herrington brought up the pay plan, saying that Republicans fulfill people's worst image of them when they propose to jack up their own salaries. He urged caution. Meese jumped in with his argument about judges, noting that 18 district judges have quit the bench in the last three years because of what they considered low pay. (The commission says that due to inflation, judges and others have lost 40 percent in real income since 1969.) Labor Secretary William Brock said the administration could not attract good people if the pay isn't raised. "Hey, you got me," Bennett chimed in. At the end of the meeting, Reagan spoke briefly. He liked the commission's proposal. So did many members of Congress. When a group of congressional leaders conferred with Reagan at the White House before Christmas, not one of them dissented when Reagan spoke favorably about the commission's plan.

BUT OPPOSITION WAS mobilizing on the White House staff, led by Regan. When the commission first handed its proposal to the White House, consideration was given to keeping it secret and then sending it along to Congress with the budget. The idea here was to throw the whole thing in the lap of Congress. Regan, however, was spooked by the Iran scandal, and he didn't want a secret report sitting around the White House unnecessarily that reporters might learn of. It was released to the press on December 15. The bigger fear was the politics of the pay raise. "Gas lines and pay raises, the Vietnam War and Watergate notwithstanding, cause more political grief than anything else," says a White House official. "If there's any way to unite the public [in opposition to the president], it's to talk about pay raises." Given the Iran scandal, "We've got other things to spend our political capital on than a pay hike," says another senior aide to Regan.

Memos criticizing the commission's pay scheme, or any pay raise at all, flowed through Regan to the president.

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Pollster Richard Wirthlin provided survey numbers that showed the public strongly opposed. Mitch Daniels, the political director, challenged the commission's claim that earning power had dropped 40 percent. He cited the analysis of *Human Events*, the conservative weekly, which concluded that if 1964, instead of 1969, was used as the base year for projections, the salary of members of Congress should be $75,613, not the current $77,400. Patrick Buchanan, the communications director, wrote to Reagan that Congress, for one, doesn't deserve "merit pay" because it can't pass a budget. To the problem of 18 judges quitting, Buchanan said, "So what? This country has 800,000 lawyers. If a guy wants to be a federal judge for ten years and go back to private practice, fine. Ferment in the federal judiciary isn't bad."

Decision time came the first weekend in January, just before Reagan went to Bethesda Naval Hospital for surgery. Congressional leaders, Cabinet members, and White House aides thought a tentative agreement had been reached for the president to recommend a boost to about $100,000 for members of Congress and judges. House Speaker Jim Wright and Republican Whip Trent Lott had been adamant that congressional salaries be kept just under $100,000. Were any change in the wind, Meese was supposed to be notified, if only to have one more chance to persuade the president to peg judges' pay as high as possible. A change occurred—the recommended pay was lowered to $89,500—and Meese was never notified. "Don Regan orchestrated things so Meese was cut out," says a Meese aide. "This isn't the first time we've lost one to Regan." When the president's letter to Congress on pay was issued on January 5, even White House aides, including Daniels, were surprised at how low the salary numbers were. Many in Congress were angry. "If you're going to have to take the heat anyway, you ought to go for a higher number," says a Republican leader. Some vowed revenge against Regan. "He's hurt himself on this one," contends a Republican.

Maybe Regan's machinations backfired, maybe they didn't. At the least, he protected the president from the greater criticism that would have come from proposing bigger raises. And he showed that, for good or bad, he's in

THE LOST AMENDMENT

Pay for federal officials has been a controversial issue as long as there have been federal officials to pay. During the ratification of the U.S. Constitution, many skeptics questioned the wisdom of allowing Congress to vote for its own pay raises as provided for in Article I, Section 6. Several states demanded an amendment preventing raises from going into effect until after the election of a new Congress.

The Constitution was ratified unamended, but the debate continued in the first Congress. "There is a seeming impropriety," noted Congressman John Vining of Delaware, "in leaving any set of men without control [over them] to put their hand into the public coffers, to take out money to put in their pockets; there is a seeming indecorum in such power, which leads me to propose a change." Congress then approved a constitutional amendment prohibiting salary changes from going into effect until after an election had been held, and sent it (along with the ten amendments in the Bill of Rights) to the states. The Bill of Rights won the necessary three-quarters majority among the states, but the congressional pay amendment did not, ensuring the disputes that continue to this day.

The first Congress was divided on how to compensate its members and other federal officials. Some argued that the federal government should set a good example by practicing economy and frugality. But Congressman John Page of Virginia suspected that "a parsimonious provision would throw the Government into the hands of bad men, by which the people might lose every thing they now held dear." Page and others insisted that the only way to guarantee the participation of the best men from all social classes would be to pay equitable salaries. "No man," Page continued, "ought to be called into the services of his country, and receive less than will defray the expenses he incurs by performing his duty. If he does, the public affairs . . . will get exclusively into the hands of nabobs and aspiring men, who will lay the foundation of [an] aristocracy."

Congress voted for the more generous compensations. The president was to receive $25,000 per year; the vice president, $5,000; Supreme Court justices, $3,500; the secretary of state, $3,500, the secretary of war, $3,000; and federal judges from $1,000 to $1,800 per year. Behaving cautiously with their own compensation, senators and representatives decided not to take a straight salary while Congress was in session, but an allowance of six dollars per day plus travel expenses.

This system remained intact until 1816, when Congress voted to pay senators and representatives a salary of $1,500 per year. The public was outraged by this move, and voted out 63 percent of the sitting congressmen—at a time when fewer than half were usually voted out of office. Properly chastened, representatives in the next session repealed the law. In 1818 members timidly voted to raise their per diem to eight dollars per day.

In general, throughout the rest of the 19th century Congress acted with great restraint in granting salary increases. Federal salaries inched only slowly upward. By 1910 the president received $75,000 per year; the vice president, $12,000; and members of Congress, who had begun to receive a salary in 1856, $7,500. Still, voters were always suspicious of Congress's ability to vote itself pay raises. In 1873 the outgoing Congress had voted to give each member a $5,000 bonus. The "Salary Grab Act," as it was known, created a sensation among voters, and was promptly repealed by the next Congress.

ROSEMARIE ZAGARRI

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charge again at the White House. Back in December, that wasn't apparent. Then, Regan didn't seem to have a candidate to replace Speakes, who becomes senior vice president for communications at Merrill Lynch on February 1. "I wondered why," says Speakes. "I figured he must have something up his sleeve." Regan bided his time through the holidays. By Christmas, he knew that Nancy Reagan wasn't adamant about a woman for the job. She'd sent word that her public comments to that effect were overstated. That put Sheila Tate out of the running, and left two finalists, Fitzwater and John Hughes, the former State Department spokesman. Secretary of State George Shultz lobbied for Hughes, but in the end Regan went with the guy he knew and trusted. Which meant the president went with him, too.

FRED BARNES

Tips from Iranamok's middleman.

THE KHASHOGGI MEMO

ONE OF THE more curious documents to surface in Iranamok is a 50-page memorandum from Saudi arms merchant Adnan Khashoggi to former national security adviser Robert McFarlane. The memo, embossed with an official-looking "CONFIDENTIAL" stamp, was sent to McFarlane on July 1, 1985. This was two days before McFarlane and David Kimche of Israel's Foreign Office held their first White House meeting about arms sales to Iran, and a few weeks before Khashoggi, Iranian arms broker Manucher Ghorbanifar, and an assortment of Israeli arms dealers and government officials met in Hamburg to draw up detailed plans for the first guns-for-hostage swap. The memo to McFarlane is revealing for what it says both about the character of Khashoggi and about the administration's precipitate plunge into its dealings with Khomeini's Islamic Republic.

Khashoggi is one of those irrepressible international hustlers who keeps bouncing back from adversity and bad publicity. Ten years ago he was virtually disowned by both the American and Saudi governments, having scandalized the American defense industry and the Saudi Defense Ministry with his success and excess. Congressional hearings on the Lockheed bribery scandal produced evidence that Khashoggi had received millions of dollars from American defense contractors to buy the favor of Saudi princes and government officials. Khashoggi's business methods were shown to be unconventional to say the least. He admitted that on one occasion he pocketed money he was supposed to give to two Saudi generals. It would have been impolite, he implied, either to deliver the cash to its intended recipients or to return it to its source.

Through a series of maneuvers like this, Khashoggi accumulated a fortune that earned him a reputation as the "richest man in the world." But he dispensed his earnings foolishly, financing a lifestyle commensurate with his bank account while eschewing prudent investment. Lately several of his business ventures have gone sour. As he now divests himself of some of his luxurious trappings to raise cash, his erstwhile partners sneer at him as a "great unbillionaire." Nevertheless, even as his business empire was foundering, Khashoggi managed to convince top Israeli officials and White House staffers that he was uniquely placed to represent their interests in a delicate diplomatic minuet with Iran.

In the memo, Khashoggi portrays himself as a long-time Middle East peacebroker. He claims to have consorted and conversed regularly with many of the most notable personalities in the region, including Israel's foreign minister Shimon Peres, the PLO's Yasir Arafat, and others. And he proffers dramatic solutions to several American problems in the Middle East, including the hijacking to Beirut of a TWA jet with 39 American passengers (which was then drawing to a close), the Iran-Iraq war, the Arab-Israeli dispute, Islamic terrorism in general, and U.S. relations with Iran.

Khashoggi claims to have presented Israeli and Palestinian representatives with two ingenious plans for settling their historical enmity. In 1983 he proposed a sort of "Marshall Plan" for the Middle East, suggesting that with enough money the great powers could bribe the two sides into making peace. But apparently nobody would put up the cash, and in his memo Khashoggi outlines a new scheme, under which Arafat and the Israelis would each sign a secret document agreeing to peace talks; it would be deposited in a Swiss bank. He says the Israelis were first to balk.

As for dealing with Islamic terror, Khashoggi tells McFarlane there are only two strategies the United States can pursue: "It can have the CIA step up its attempts to sew [sic] dissension among the Shi'as, in the hope that they will eventually blow up from their own friction." Or it may convince "some third party whose favour the terrorists want to curry that they've already had enough of a victory and that they'd do well to quit while they are ahead . . ."

AFTER THE Iran scandal broke, the administration described its decision to sell arms to Iran as part of a policy of seeking out moderates in the Khomeini regime. Secret documents recently made public by the White House suggest that this idea originated with the Israelis. Khashoggi's memo, and the series of meetings to plot the arms deals that immediately followed, indicate that both the Israelis and the Americans may have taken their cue from Khashoggi himself and his sidekick, Ghorbanifar. Whatever the case, the administration's dealings with Iran resembled Khashoggi's proposal in many ways.

In the memo Khashoggi says that an unnamed Iranian intelligence operative—whom he later identified to Barbara Walters on "20/20" as Ghorbanifar—had informed him

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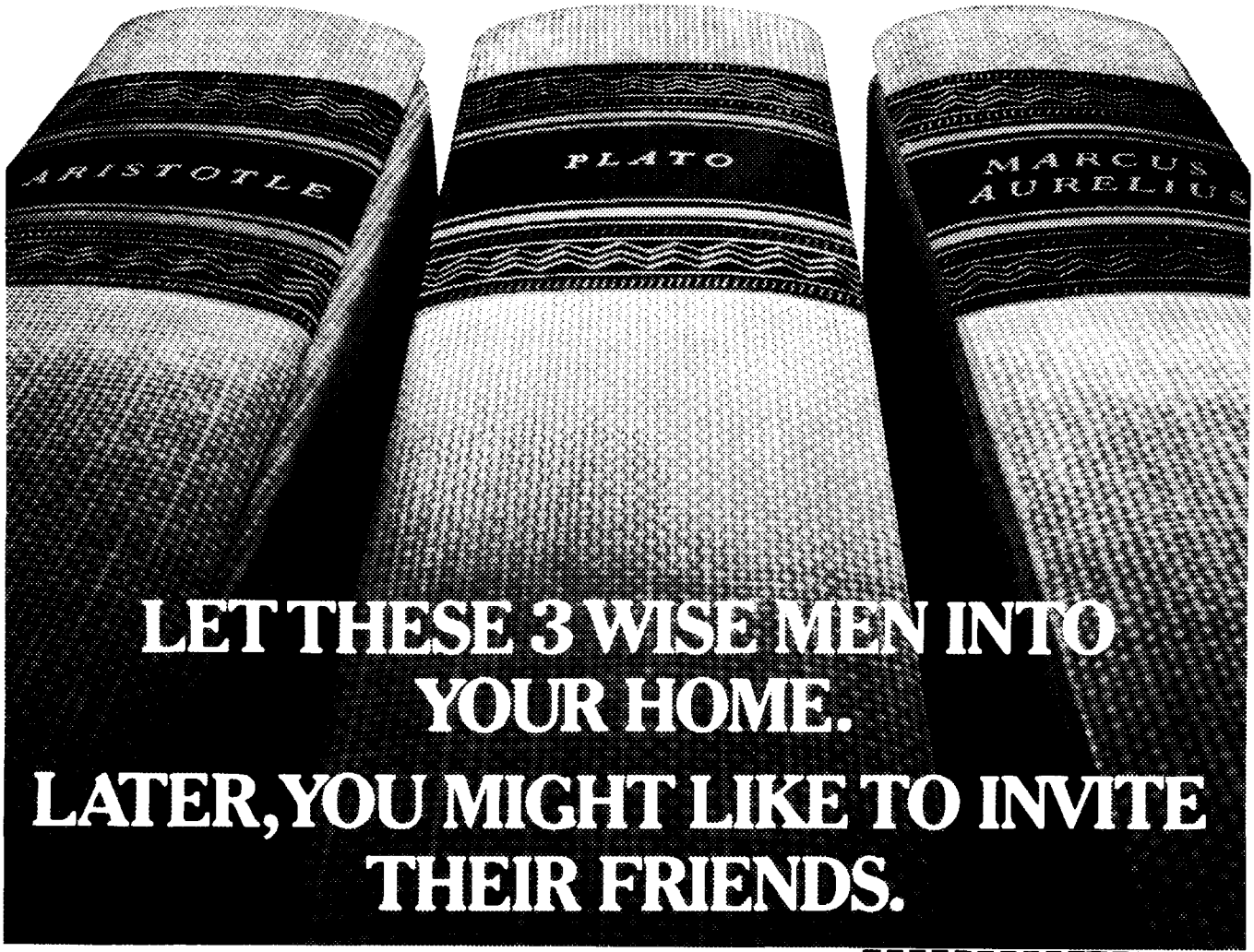

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that the Khomeini regime was splintering into three competing factions: an anti-Communist, pro-West group of merchants, civil servants, and top military officers; an ultramilitant, extreme left faction that supports terrorism; and a pragmatic tendency, based in the Iranian Parliament, that favored the domestic policies of the right but the foreign policy of the left. With proper cultivation of the most conservative tendency, Ghorbanifar told Khashoggi, "We will bring about a situation which is much better or less bad that [sic] it is right now. Make no mistake about it, the government that will come to power as the result of our operation will be Moslem, even fanatically so. [But] by Iranian standards, they will be moderate and they will be move [sic] in the direction of more and more moderation."

By the time Khashoggi wrote to McFarlane, the scenario had been embellished to include detailed instructions for winning the Iranian moderates' favor. Unofficial intermediaries such as Khashoggi and Ghorbanifar were said to be essential actors in the plan: "There is only one man outside Iran to whom [moderate Iranians] can turn for the kind of help which [they] now desperately need. He is well connected internationally and above all, he is trusted in the Moslem world and in [Iran]. . . . He could easily get away with giving money to mullahs who, needless to say, would turn down any offers of payment made to [them] by Westerners. . . . The man that I have in mind could even arrange the necessary operational details. . . . As you know, it is permissible to give gifts to visitors to Saudi Arabia, so if it proves necessary to bribe some Iranian, it can be done under cover of a gift."

Who is this well-respected, well-connected man about the world who could play the role of Islamic intermediary? The memo does not say. But in a cover letter to McFarlane, Khashoggi says he knows at least one gifted Islamic personality who is ready to volunteer. The American approach to Iranian moderates, he announces, "must come from one such as myself. . . ."

THERE IS no doubt that McFarlane received Khashoggi's memo. Its arrival at the White House was confirmed by the former NSC chief during his recent testimony at a closed congressional hearing. Whether the document was carefully read by McFarlane or any of his aides is another matter; indications are that the NSC accepted delivery of Khashoggi's missive with a mixture of ennui and amusement. McFarlane told Congress that Khashoggi was in the habit of sending voluminous dissertations containing his theories about world peace. One of McFarlane's associates described them as "The Great Ideas Series," adding: "The stuff came in and he would send it to his [junior NSC] staff across the street. It may be that nobody ever read it."

Even so, it is clear that one way or another Khashoggi succeeded in getting himself heard. He went ahead in his self-appointed role as a broker between Washington and Tehran. The administration actually let him run the show as he arranged millions of dollars in financing for the purchase of surface-to-air missiles. Perhaps White House officials should have looked at Khashoggi's treatises more carefully. If they had, they might have seen that his principal objective in the arms deal was satisfying his own megalomania. Hardly the sort of man to entrust with a precarious diplomatic mission.

MARK HOSENBALL

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Gorbachev's push comes to shove.

THE 'GLASNOST' TEST

ONCE UPON A TIME it was easy to be a Soviet expert. The number of Soviet decision-makers was strictly limited, their minds and values familiar. Ever since October 1917, the Communist elite has followed a well-defined set of priorities, which assigned the highest value to preserving its monopoly on political power and the lowest to the welfare of its citizenry. Bad news was minimized; popular dissatisfaction with the regime went unacknowledged.

These practices appear to be changing, but it is difficult to tell whether Gorbachev's much-publicized policy of *glasnost*—or public openness—represents merely skillful exploitation of public relations techniques learned from the West or a new trend in administering the country and managing the flow of information.

On December 18, 1986, the Soviet telegraphic agency, Tass, carried an unprecedented report. It informed the Soviet public that the previous day a violent demonstration had broken out in the capital of the Kazakh Republic, Alma-Ata, following the replacement of the top Communist official, a Moslem, with a Russian. The information furnished by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a Soviet journalist who had been on the scene revealed that the riot involved hundreds of Kazakh students who went on a rampage, destroying property and shouting, "Kazakhstan for Kazakhs!"

Soviet media blamed the riot on young hooligans allegedly acting under the influence of alcohol and drugs. Subsequent reports gathered by Western journalists indicated that the riots in fact involved thousands, that there were fatalities on both sides, and that one target of violence was the headquarters of the Communist Party. This clearly was not a hooligan outburst.

Riots are not unknown in the Soviet Union, but they are never reported in the official press and seldom in the Western media, since they are likely to occur in the provincial cities where foreign journalists rarely penetrate. In most cases they are inspired by economic rather than political causes, such as local food shortages. The authorities quick-

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ly quell them by a combination of force and concessions. The riots in Alma-Ata are unusual both because of their political character and because of the authorities' willingness to report on them, however inadequately.

Kazakhstan is one of six Moslem republics in the Soviet Union. Unlike the other five, however, in which Moslems constitute a clear majority, it has gradually lost its predominantly Islamic character, partly from Russian colonization, partly from slaughter of the indigenous inhabitants. The Kazakhs, who had come under Russian rule voluntarily in the 18th century, speak a dialect of Turkic and profess Sunni Islam. Under czarist rule they fared quite well, being accorded extensive tribal self-government as well as exemption from military service. Until the late 1920s most of them pursued seasonal nomadism, known as transhumance.

Russo-Kazakh ethnic friction began early in the 20th century as a result of the influx of Russian colonists who either bought or seized the nomads' grazing land and put it to the plow. But the real tragedy struck during Stalin's collectivization drive, which compelled the Kazakhs to give up their nomadic habits and settle in agrarian communities. Their resistance was so fierce that they suffered staggering losses. From the nearly 4 million indicated in the 1926 census, they were reduced to 3.1 million in 1939—a decline that, if allowance is made for the natural growth over 13 years, meant that well over one-fourth of the Kazakhs had perished. In the 1950s, under Khrushchev's "virgin soil" campaign, more Russians and Ukrainians poured into Kazakhstan. All these factors caused the proportion of Kazakhs in what was nominally their republic to decline. By 1959 Slavs outnumbered them 5-to-3.

As one may imagine, given these political and economic realities, relations between Kazakhs and the Slav colonists are very strained. The two populations do not mix socially and do not intermarry. They are in keen competition for better-paying jobs, housing, and scarce consumer goods. It has been the practice of the Soviet authorities to compensate the frustrated national feelings of the minorities by allowing them some appurtenances of sovereignty along with the more harmless cultural expressions of national sentiment, such as folklore. One aspect of this policy has been the practice of administrative "sandwiching," by virtue of which the posts of chairmen of party and state institutions are given to figurehead natives while real power is vested in their deputies, who are almost always Russians.

IT IS DIFFICULT to understand why Gorbachev should have violated this custom by replacing a Kazakh with a Russian in the position of first secretary of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan. Perhaps it was in recognition of the fact that Kazakhstan has ceased to be a "Moslem" republic, now that its Slavic inhabitants outnumber Kazakhs. Perhaps it was part of an effort to disrupt the republic's notorious network of official corruption in which family and tribal ties play a powerful role.

Whatever the reason, a blunder was committed that led to the outburst of embarrassing nationalist violence. It is almost certain that the inspiration behind the Alma-Ata disturbances was nationalist and not religious. Islamic "fundamentalism" has not had powerful repercussions in the Soviet Union, where nearly 70 years of relentless anti-religious policies have secularized religious sentiments and transformed them into nationalist emotions. This holds especially true of the one-time nomadic Moslems, who have never been given to religious fanaticism.

Alma-Ata is a portent of troublesome developments for the Soviet leadership. The stirrings of nationalist passions, encouraged by anti-Western movements in the Middle East and emboldened by the demographic dynamism of Russia's Moslems, pose dangerous problems for a regime that more than ever requires calm and order to carry out its reforms. Why, then, was Moscow willing to allow reporting on these unwelcome events?

FROM THE DAY the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, they have acted on the premise that bad news has long legs and travels fast enough on its own. The function of the press is to provide an antidote to word-of-mouth information by stressing upbeat news and replacing disagreeable facts with pleasurable hopes. This policy though, has made little sense since foreign broadcasts, which inform Soviet listeners about happenings at home as well as abroad, began penetrating into the Soviet Union. The inability of the Communist apparatus to respond to this information, given its pretense that it does not exist, has been frustrating to the authorities. Nevertheless, the bureaucracy entrenched in the press has refused to budge. (Interestingly, Soviet television—a relatively new, post-Stalinist medium—has been much less rigid in its policies.)

Gorbachev is determined to carry out major reforms, and to do so, he seems to feel that he must convey to the Soviet public a better grasp of the magnitude of the problems the country faces. This is the purpose of *glasnost*. In a recent speech, he told his listeners in almost plaintive tones that the absence in the Soviet Union of a multiparty system makes it incumbent on the ruling Communist Party to engage in self-criticism. Within limits that do not appear to have been clearly defined as yet, Soviet media are to carry truthful reports on internal conditions, even if such reports damage the regime's reputation.

One can, of course, only welcome such a trend. The educated segment of the Soviet population is surprisingly well informed and, if it is to participate in the task of revitalizing a moribund system, cannot be treated like children from whom bad news must be withheld. The question is whether a regime that from the day of its creation has insisted on replacing reality with fantasy and has made lying almost a part of its constitutional order can let in the fresh winds of truth and controversy without fatally weakening its hold on the country.

RICHARD PIPES

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The clones that ate American journalism.

INVASION OF THE GANNETTOIDS

BY PHILIP WEISS

NOT LONG AGO an editor for a Gannett newspaper in a large city was visited by a senior evaluation team from the company's headquarters in Rosslyn, Virginia. Gannett is the largest newspaper chain in the country, and it is constantly assembling crews to judge things and kindle corporate spirit: GO! Teams, the Project S Squad, Rev Teams, newspaper rack-cleaning teams, and, most dauntingly, "a task force of young geniuses," as chairman Allen H. Neuharth called the posse that led the way to the start-up of Gannett's flagship paper, *USA Today*.

This team was assessing the actual paper, and the editor was looking forward to the scrutiny. "But nobody said, 'You're not doing enough investigative reporting or not enough on pollution in your community or about the homeless,' " the editor recalls. "They basically said, 'How come your national weather map is fuzzy? How come your photo reproduction is off here?' And these were senior people, right below John Curley [the chief executive officer] and Al Neuharth. It was disturbing." In the end the visit reinforced the editor's sense that there was a "Gannett formula" that satisfied a corporate vision but did not have much to do with putting out a good newspaper.

Gannett's roving geniuses are having more and more influence on American journalism these days. Gannett owns 93 daily newspapers and has a seemingly insatiable appetite for new ones. Neuharth is pastor of a "journalism of hope" that he says will balance "good and bad, glad and sad," and thus counteract the journalism that leaves readers "discouraged or mad or indignant." In the place of a fierce commitment to a community that the best journalism often involves, Gannett offers generic front pages with a TV-like gloss. Meanwhile it sustains *USA Today*, which is said to have lost at least $380 million in four-and-a-half years of publication, in part by draining resources from other dailies, requiring them to "loan" reporters and editors to the national paper's staff for months at a time.

The problem with Gannett isn't simply its formula or its chairman, but the company's corporate culture. The product *is* the company—cheerful, superficial, self-promoting, suspicious of ideas, conformist, and implicitly authoritarian. Gannett's story is part of the familiar American pattern of executive indulgence, in which more glory surrounds corporate ascension than a good product, in which quality need not be earned, merely purchased. But the Gannett story is more, too. For as many as six million daily readers, most of them in one-newspaper towns, Gannett serves as chief interpreter and informer about society—and does so unsustained by ideals of independence or thoroughness.

It's raining in Rosslyn. In John Curley's office on the 31st floor of the Gannett headquarters, the view of the Washington Monument and Capitol that has appeared as a backdrop in so many executive portraits is obscured. All you can see is the nearby *USA Today* building. Muzak is playing, and several televisions set high in the wall are going soundlessly.

Neuharth, 62, handed over the reins to Curley, 48, last June. I ask Curley about the precepts of Gannett journalism. "I believe we are competing for people's time," he says. "We have to do a more effective job as newspaper packagers so that the reader can find what he or she wants quickly. If we do a better job, they'll be able to read more than one paper. If you know exactly where the stuff is that you want to read, you don't have to shop around for it. I have a helluva time finding sports in the *Times*." He boils it down to: "Easy to find, easy to read."

Curley seems a little reddened. He says he just got back from El Paso, that he travels 70 percent of the time. Neuharth once bragged that he travels 300,000 miles a year. It's a startling figure, flying round-trip from New York to Chicago every other day; but then, that much time at 35,000 feet probably made *USA Today* inevitable. When he came down from the stratosphere with his vision of the paper in 1981, Neuharth said: "The American people from Washington, D.C., to Walla Walla, Washington; from Maine to Miami; from Chicago to Corpus Christi are more hungry than ever for information." That's how he talks, in a singsong, upbeat Gannett-speak that is the voice of the corporation and many of its newspapers.

The Gannett executive's giddy Brownian motion is sped by the company's hell-bent growth (from $690 million revenues in 1978 to $2.2 billion in 1985) and imitated by the Gannett executive corps. "The way to advance at Gannett is to become an editor and climb from small to big papers," says Mike Meyers, a former reporter in the chain. "It was always, 'My Gannett career,' " Isabel Spencer, a former editor, says of those who were anxious to move on from Wilmington. In one six-year period *Florida Today* (then *Cocoa Today*) had three publishers and five editors. *The Saratogian* in New York had three publishers in three years.

Reporters and editors I talked to spoke of roving "Gannettoids": frequently reassigned editors and publishers favored by management. Gannett journalists compare the Gannettoid to a district manager in a sales operation, some-

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one who can walk into any unit and clean out deadwood in a hurry. "They think they can just as easily put out a paper in one community as they can in another," one editor says. "What gets lost is a community's distinctiveness, its character, its problems."

The typical Gannett paper is wide-ranging but uninspiring, and not very serious. Features and sports often get more attention than news. The December 2 *Herald Statesman* of Yonkers, for instance, devotes over two-thirds of its front page to photos of the Giants football game and the lighting at Rockefeller Center. The longest stories in the October 29 *Florida Today* promote the Miami Dolphins and the Brevard County Fair, complete with a page-one graphic on how many sausages will be sold. For all its color, the paper is dull and occasionally semiliterate: its consumer column tells readers where they can purchase hard-to-find chewing gum and computer products; a story on a widower who returned his wife's Social Security checks says he was following his "conscious."

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

And everywhere, cats, deer, raccoons. The dozen Gannett papers I looked at were more comfortable with stories about animals than about local corruption or foreign politics or intellectually challenging subjects. A *Rochester Times-Union* front page features three photos of animals: a dog on whose behalf his owner was suing an airline for mistreatment, pilot whales dying off Cape Cod, and the Shrewsbury, Vermont, moose-and-cow crisis. Even a big-city Gannett paper, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, puts stories about a moose and a deer-hunting accident on the front page the same day.

By many accounts Gannett improves small papers it buys. Yet you'll look in vain for any case of an enlightened response to a community comparable to what Knight-Ridder, the nation's second largest chain, did with the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. Knight-Ridder poured in money and talent to give Philadelphia an independent, probing, and serious voice. The Gannett tradition is to price a local paper as high as possible (nowadays 35 cents) and then "market" the paper's contents. Chuck Carpenter, the managing editor of the Danville (Illinois) *Commercial-News*, points to surveys showing that 40 percent of readers don't read to the continuation of stories. "Why should we do that to our readers?" he says, meaning make them turn the page. Curley seconds the argument. Indeed, you can ask just about any Gannettoid about reporting and he quotes percentages. Rochester publisher Vince Spezzano tells me about the 12 percent of readers who want the crossword puzzle.

This constant comparing of the moose story with the news from Manila reflects Neuharth's television-inspired commandments. We're in the "age of the Information Society," he says, as if the ever-expanding number of facts in the universe all have the same weight. Thus the "Spotlight" corner of *Florida Today*'s front page, where five inches a day are devoted to a color photo of, say, a retired utility inspector (who likes Truman) and his wife, Eloise. A big journalistic challenge at Gannett is upping the story count, so that images flash by as they do on the tube. Fueled by surveys and Neuharth's injunction that journalism must not leave people discouraged, Gannett editing strives for a nobody's-home feeling. There are few strong voices in the columns, but countless inspiring pictures. TV stuff is often front-page news. John C. Quinn, the company's chief news executive, talks of *USA Today* as a paper "edited by our readers," and this bit of advice seems a caution against the editor who would challenge or crusade. When I mention investigative reporting to Curley, he says it's important, but goes on to refer to it as "information, a collection of data that's not usually available."

Curley and I are talking in a crazy setting. Two golden shafts rise from the floor at an angle to form a table, giving the impression that I'm sitting in a large hand. A golden telescope. A potted palm. Fresh flowers. Gold antlerlike sculpture. Split wood piled on the thick carpet in the adjoining boardroom. Big art. Did someone put acid in my coffee? The bathrooms are all brown marble and floor-to-ceiling mirrors. Nearby's a pristine room done in white

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with two clear glass horses battling at the center of an ellipsoid table. I ask Curley about the lavishness of the corporate headquarters, and he smiles and says, "We're not going to do it [build it] again next year, we might as well do it right."

The excuse for Gannett's opulence is: Don't forget, they were just a string of small-town papers ten years ago, and this is how they thought they'd impress Wall Street. But Gannett is No. 173 on the Fortune 500. Wall Street swooned ages ago, and began to expect similar returns from other news organizations; thus the celebrated disgruntlement of third-generation family newspaper heirs. No, the Rosslyn fleshpots are merely the fullest expression of the Gannett yoga, that spiraling path of understanding that the Gannettoid pursues upward from the podunk paper of 7,000. Neuharth's Rochester office is said to have opened on a bedroom with mirrored closet and a Jacuzzi with a TV hanging over it. Meanwhile, when he toured the realm (limos in Des Moines), local publishers scrambled to get pouilly-fuissé and Montrachet on ice. Neuharth, by the way, made $1.3 million last year, Curley, $685,000.

THE VANITY of a good newspaper company is the hallway full of prizes and Armistice Day printing plates. The vanity of Gannett is the story on page one of the business page when the local publisher wins a Gannett management award. Gannett news judgment always defers to the corporation. All the subtlety that is not needed for, say, local politics becomes crucial and delightful when it comes to covering Gannett's progress. In the October 29 *Florida Today* the only business brief that wasn't was the six-paragraph report telling of Gannett's January stock split. Once an editor objected to orders to run this stuff as violating local autonomy. Neuharth responded with sarcasm, writing in the house organ, *Gannetteer*, that local autonomy meant having the "wisdom" to run the company's puff pieces. "Sometimes you felt like you were working at Tass," says Peter Adams, a former *USA Today* reporter now at the *Orlando Sentinel*.

My theory about Neuharth's famous habit of only wearing black, white, and gray is that he wants to look good for his many appearances in print. The *Gannetteer* and annual report are like Neuharth photo albums. Not long ago the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* ran nine photos of Neuharth during a publishers' meeting in Waikiki Beach, according to the *Columbia Journalism Review*. Dan Gibson, a former features editor at *Florida Today*, says Neuharth's parties at Pumpkin Center, his log-cabinlike house in Cocoa Beach, had to be played on page one of the features section. When Neuharth got exercised about dogs defecating on the beach, the paper editorialized against it. When that didn't work, the Gannett Foundation gave the city $20,000 to hire a dogcatcher.

Meanwhile, the presses churned out copies of a Neuharth family genealogy before a reunion, according to Peter Adams, and the paper promoted the career of Neuharth's second wife, a state senator named Lori Wilson, according to *The South* magazine. The couple, who met at a missile launch, are now divorced, but another story had them cavorting in white jumpsuits with the names of all the Gannett papers printed on them in black.

One Neuharth story that didn't get much ink in Gannett papers was the revelation in December that he had been paying $100 a month in child support payments for the last 21 years to a woman who claimed to have gotten pregnant after a fling with Neuharth in 1965. Neuharth denied paternity and said he paid the money simply to rid himself of a "nuisance" lawsuit.

There are lots of funny Neuharth stories. But they make comedy of what is actually quite troubling: the extent to which, in spite of all pronouncements of autonomy, his jingoisms and dullness of wit trickle down to the papers. The day the space shuttle blew up, both the editorial and editorial cartoon in *USA Today* quoted Browning's line about a man's reach exceeding his grasp. Eerily, Neuharth had used a variant on the line for three years running in his annual speech to the company. It's not that the writers cribbed it from the chairman, but that he's fostered such a mindlessly sunny and engulfing culture. For weeks after the Challenger explosion, *USA Today* seemed to regard it as a cause for national celebration and togetherness. "'PERFECT' ISN'T POSSIBLE, 'FUTURE BELONGS TO THE BRAVE'" set the tone. One headline about NASA's investigation even said employees feared a "witch-hunt," as if something had not really gone terribly wrong.

After my interview with Curley I walk down a giant spiral staircase and start to look around a Gannett dining room with a marble fountain going in the middle. A guy in a suit says I should get permission from Ms. Gorham down the hall. More fresh flowers. Bigger art. Women are in most of the offices. (To its credit, Gannett has done a superb job of hiring blacks and women.) Ms. Gorham's on the phone, arranging some sort of corporate affair. "Do you want mugs?" she says. You see the mugs around; they've got the Gannett G on them, as does so much at Gannett, from corporate planes to umbrellas to the apron worn by a man who's walking by.

Another aspect of Gannett culture: while all the corporate trappings are characterized by wretched excess, lowly reporters work in offices governed by chintziness. Reporters who toured the headquarters when it was still in Rochester recall such details as a terrazzo floor with pebbles imported from Italy. At the same time they were getting memos from management saying that the custom of distributing Christmas turkeys was giving way to $10 certificates at the supermarket; that Neuharth's name in published references was to be preceded by the words "chairman and president"; that reporters' desks were to be cleared of "debris."

That "debris" included notebooks, phone books, papers, and documents, the sort of clutter a working reporter accumulates. The belittling of reporting is a Gannett tradition. Mike Meyers tells of supply cabinets being closed at the Binghamton *Press & Sun-Bulletin* and reporters being told to take notes on typing paper. Art Latham tells of editing a free, weekly edition of the daily Santa Fe *New Mexican* by literally stripping stories out of the original paper; he asked

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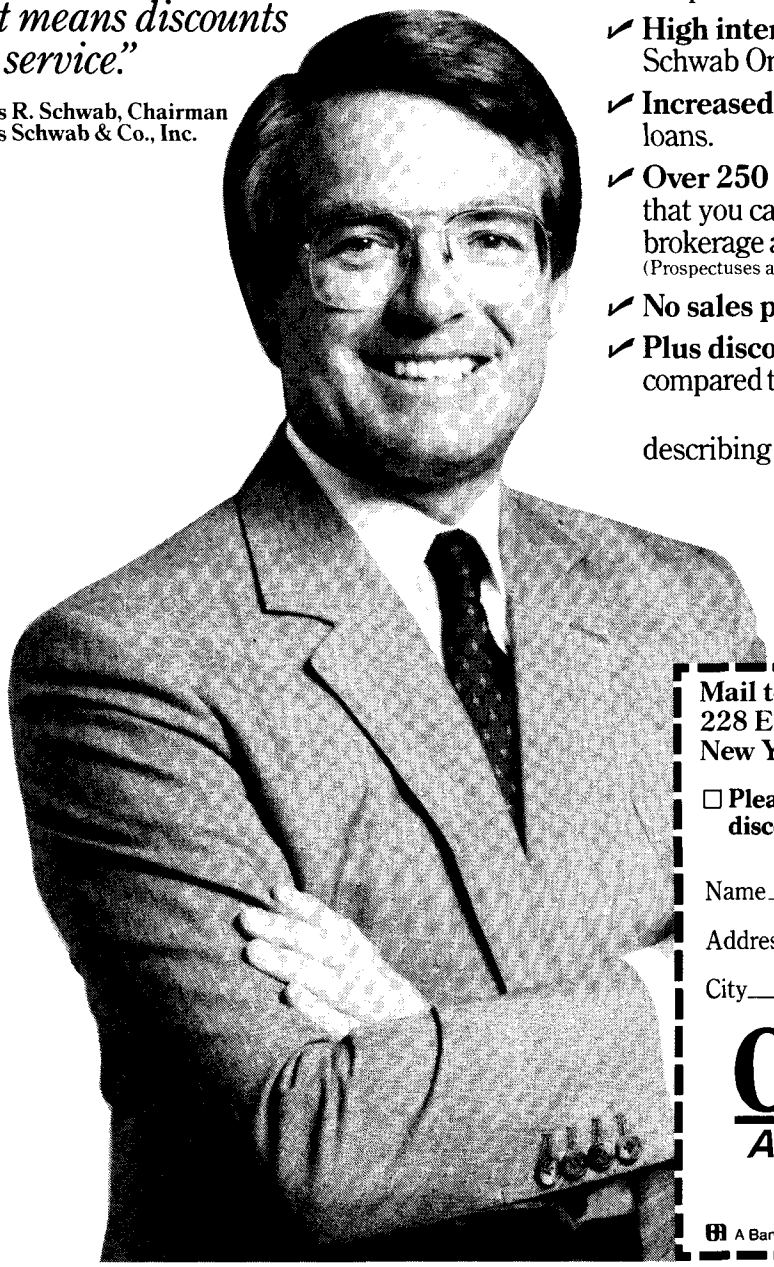

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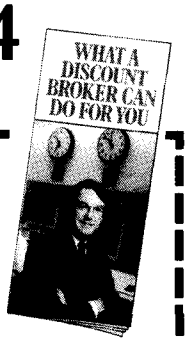

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for an editorial budget and was told, No, the weekly was a "whore product" (Wayne Vann, the publisher who allegedly said this, did not return calls). A senior reporter at a Gannett paper says, "I went into my managing editor and said, 'I can't pay my bills, I need a raise.' He said, 'You know I'd like to do it. But this company doesn't value writers. You're all dispensable. I can give you $100 more tomorrow if you become an editor.' "

Inexperienced reporters come cheap, and it's possible to put out a paper with them—an unimpressive paper, that is. If you're under pressure to get a pre-tax profit of 30 percent to 35 percent—the figure that analyst Bruce Thorp and the business press say Gannett achieves—it is hard to rationalize keeping someone with six years of experience in the newsroom when you can hire a replacement for two-thirds the cost.

Many accomplished reporters leave. Five years after winning the Pulitzer Prize for his Attica coverage, Dick Cooper left the Rochester *Times-Union* for the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. "The *Inquirer* encouraged its reporters to continue to be reporters," he says. After 13 years in Gannett, Meyers in 1984 left for the *Minneapolis Star & Tribune*, a family-owned paper. "I suddenly had editors with a professional attitude, asking me what my opinion was. Is this worth covering or not? Hell, I even had an editor apologize to me in front of the whole business staff. At Gannett you would somehow be losing your manhood if you addressed reporters on an equal footing."

This sort of hierarchy hurts journalism. Then, too, Gannett staffing levels often preclude the sort of explanatory or investigative work known as "enterprise" reporting. It's hard to develop sources at City Hall if you also have to cover the school board. In a recent edition of the Binghamton paper, one reporter wrote about both a county clinic's policy on birth control and school district building plans, another about both a utility's excess capacity and a local celebration in anticipation of the turn of the century. In the December 3 *Journal-News* of Rockland County, Frank Leonard wrote three stories and collaborated on a fourth, Louis Lavelle wrote four, James Walsh wrote five short stories, and Leslie Boyd wrote five stories that totaled 60 column inches.

THE EXEMPLAR of the Gannett style, of course, is *USA Today*. It may be true, as Curley says, that "people have quit dumping on *USA Today*," but it's hard to conceive of a paper that is so heavily edited, so clipped, so visual, so uniform in tone and format as providing a haven for an independent reporter.

Many Gannett reporters splash down at *USA Today* via something called the "loaner" program, in which their home papers pay their salaries and even housing costs in Washington, thus keeping the cost off *USA Today*'s red books. Today there are 35 loaners. There have been hundreds before. The two Rochester papers lost as many as 12 staffers at the start, Meyers says, not all of whom they recovered. One former loaner compares the system to a colonial power exacting tribute.

How much *USA Today* now bleeds the Gannett system is a subject of hot dispute. Curley says the loaners take back valuable skills to their home papers. And while acknowledging that space for stories in those papers was cut by 2.4 percent the year that *USA Today* began publication, he says that since then it has grown 1.35 percent per year. Meyers and Spencer, as well as current Gannett journalists, assert that news columns continued to drop in later years. Curley says this is "myth. . . . Reporters' skills sometimes desert them when they get mixed up in corporate intrigue." Even so, Curley's numbers don't take into account such factors as (*a*) larger type size, which decreases the amount of copy, and (*b*) greater emphasis on sports and features.

Leaving aside *USA Today*, there are places to which excellent reporters (the chain is full of them) can aspire—notably the Gannett News Service and the large papers the company bought recently in Detroit, Little Rock, Louisville, and Des Moines. The latter two were family-owned papers with great journalistic traditions, and there's fear in Iowa and Kentucky about Gannett's plans for the *Des Moines Register* and the *Louisville Times* and *Courier-Journal*.

The day Gannett acquired the *Register*, the head of a losing bidder was asked whether Gannett had overpaid. Not at all, he replied. But how could he think that, given that he had bid some $40 million less? "Simple," he said. "Gannett is prepared to do things we won't do to make money."

A less barbed theory on Gannett's high bids is that Gannett wishes to gain respect; simply, these papers will win Pulitzer Prizes. Its paucity of Pulitzers vexes Gannett. The fact that it is putting resources into the lackluster Detroit paper and that it has named the highly respected Michael G. Gartner as editor in Louisville suggest that it means to win some.

But getting big prizes from juries takes months, even years, and in the interim Gannett has hit on a more reliable method of accumulating them. Recently it began circulating a list called "Gannett Pulitzer Prizes," listing 34. A closer look shows that at least 27 of those were won before Gannett acquired the papers in question. In fact, 21 were won in Louisville and Des Moines, largely through the pursuit of costly practices that are unfamiliar to the mingy giant. Gannett, it seems, wants the prestige of the prizes without the hassles of good journalism that go into earning them.

To get a good story and tell it better than anyone else requires a lot of thought. Neuharth's commandment that his papers hold up a mirror to the country (thus the use of "we" and "us" when addressing readers) conveys the message that a reporter or editor should discount his or her own thoughts on a subject and consider only what America is thinking, or what the marketing surveys say America is thinking. As the Gannettoids swallow more communities and profit centers, spewing out more of their banal newspapers, reporters and editors who want to bring some passion to their work will be crowded out. The Gannett world has little room for criticisms, differences, conflicts. All thoughts of journalistic excellence are drowned out by that clarion call—echoing from newsroom to newsroom, from Marin to Muskogee, Guam to Green Bay: "Can you do something to improve that weather map?" □

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What Israel does for itself—and for us.

BYZANTINE BEDFELLOWS

BY YO'AV KARNY

IN THE mid-1950s a new alliance began to take shape in the Middle East. It has never been formally declared, and some of its participants were not very eager to join it. Yet it has proved more lasting than most open and ostensibly fraternal treaties in the Third World. Based on the fear of rising Arab nationalism that threatened to engulf the non-Arab elements on the margins of the region, this alliance has been held together by what might be called the "peripheral doctrine." It unites four countries that could not be more different: Turkey, Iran, Ethiopia, and Israel.

According to the peripheral doctrine, the history of the Middle East may be boiled down thus: a number of non-Arab national states struggle to maintain their integrity by resisting the hegemonic tendencies of the Arab (or Islamic) majorities in the region. None of these states—the Persian (Iran), the Amharic (Ethiopia), the Turkish, or the Jewish—is homogeneous. Each has ethnic groups living in its midst that are viewed as a threat to national unity. Each has age-old existential interests transcending even the most internationalistic or messianic ideologies. Thus the sounds of ancient Abyssinian nationalism echo from the mouths of Ethiopia's communist militarists, just as those of ancient Persian nationalism resonate in the slogans of Iran's Islamic revolutionaries.

These nations have set aside ideological and cultural differences to join in countering what has at times seemed to be an ominous inevitability: the takeover of a heterogeneous region by a nationalistic movement whose xenophobia and uncompromising missionary zeal, often religiously based, gave the peripheral nations (as well as internal non-Arab or non-Islamic minorities such as the Kurds and the Christian Maronites) solid grounds for fear and insecurity. Some of these national groups were, and still are, viewed by the Arab majority in the Middle East as the political heirs of the 11th-century Crusaders—namely, as ahistorical, and by definition ephemeral, elements. Others were considered troublemakers who served foreign interests, and were therefore natural targets for extinction.

Over the last three decades, the peripheral doctrine has accounted for political decisions that, outside of their historical context, might well be considered mad. Why else would Israel, the principal target on the Ayatollah Khomeini's rhetorical hit list, seek to strengthen the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran? Why would a Jewish government in Jerusalem attempt to appease powers in Tehran that have repeatedly committed themselves to dismantling "the artificial entity which occupies Palestine"?

Although most alliances in the Middle East have been anything but stable, the bilateral or multilateral arrangements on its periphery have survived a number of dramatic tests. The Iranian revolution of 1979 was by no means the first of these.

In Ethiopia five years earlier, a popular military junta pledging political and social reforms toppled Emperor Haile Selassie from his throne. A bloody coup led by a group of leftist officers swiftly squelched this would-be democratic revolution. The power struggles finally culminated in February 1977 in the victory of a young colonel, Mengistu Haile Mariam, whom Soviet diplomats would admiringly describe as possessing "the qualities of Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin combined."

Mengistu lost no time in ousting dozens of U.S. military personnel, putting an end to the American intelligence operation that kept tabs on the Soviet navy's movements in the northeastern sector of the Indian Ocean, and declaring his intention to establish the first full-fledged Communist state on the African continent. Within a few months Ethiopia became the prime Soviet catch in Africa—perhaps in the entire Third World since Egypt's break with the West in the early 1950s. The change of regime did not totally sever the ties that had existed between Jerusalem and Addis Ababa. Although relations were downgraded after the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, when Ethiopia joined the bandwagon of other African states in breaking off official ties with Israel, they persisted under cover.

The same year Mengistu took power, President Anwar al-Sadat warned that Egypt would not hesitate to resort to arms if Ethiopia persisted in its alleged intention to divert the waters of the Nile, Egypt's life source. Both Egypt and the Sudan also declared the Red Sea to be an "Arab lake"; along with Saudi Arabia, they bolstered their support of the secessionist rebels of Eritrea, and helped subsidize a Somalian attempt to annex a good portion of southeast Ethiopia. Thus, the Amharic state, which in the 1950s felt threatened by the onslaught of Arab nationalism, was reliving the nightmare two decades later. That the Amharic state had been earlier "reactionary" and Arab nationalism "progressive," and that these postures were now reversed, made no difference. The confrontation was not ideological.

The Israelis were eventually kicked out of Ethiopia when Israel's foreign minister at the time, Moshe Dayan, in a still unexplained indiscretion, admitted the relationship. Founded in secrecy, the alliance endured as long as secrecy

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was maintained. (According to reliable reports, however, the Israelis later made a comeback in Ethiopia—after the West had written it off to Soviet influence.)

THE SAME logic was applied by the Israelis to post-Pahlavi Iran. Their extensive relationship with the Shah was based on the very real common interest of being faced by Arab enmities. Yaakov Nimrodi, the Israeli arms dealer now implicated in the Iran-*contra* affair, who served as Israel's military attaché to Tehran in the 1960s, told an Israeli journalist in 1983: "We built this country [Iran], we built [its] army." Even if Nimrodi was blustering a bit, the relations between the two governments were akin to those between the United States and its NATO allies.

Thanks to its vast network of contacts, Israel managed to maintain open channels to Iran's military command well after the revolution. Later the Israelis used their intimate knowledge of the Iranian scene to gain access to Iran's highest political echelons. In a recent fascinating article in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, Nimrodi divulged the details of a conversation he had in 1985, "somewhere in the West," with "an Iranian figure, prominent in both the political and clerical establishments." That VIP, perhaps the speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Hojatolislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, presented the Israeli with "an impressive list of people and organizations in Iran that favor a pro-Western line." Should that list be made public, Nimrodi writes, "those familiar with the subtleties of Iran's politics would rub their eyes with incredulity." According to Nimrodi's notes, his Iranian interlocutor indicated the interest of like-minded Iranians in "cooperating with the West, precisely that. We have common interests, and we want to side with the West."

This was nothing new for the Israelis. The peripheral school in Israel's intelligence community and academia had long maintained that Persian nationalism, however Islamic, was still battling Arab supremacist aspirations. Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980 confirmed this view. Like Somalia vis-à-vis Ethiopia three years before, Iraq too sought to capitalize on Iran's internal turmoil to settle its historic score with Persian nationalism.

In a public speech in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in 1984, former Israeli defense minister Ariel Sharon confirmed that Israel had supplied arms to Iran "with the consent of the United States." He offered this rationale: "It would be a serious blunder to let Iraq win. If the Iraqis win the war, we will have the Soviet Union on Iran's border." Sharon's geography aside (the Soviet Union has always bordered Iran), it is clear that an Iraqi victory would weaken the Iranian capacity to resist Soviet pressure.

If Iraq won the war, Iran in all probability would lapse into chaos far worse than that it experienced early on in the revolution. Its national minorities would attempt to break from the Persian state, while armed political factions vied for control of the urban centers. The most logical scenario under these circumstances would be Soviet military intervention. For years the Soviets have kept a massive army along their Iranian border that would require short notice to march on Tehran.

The Iranian figure with whom Yaakov Nimrodi established a dialogue wrote to him in July 1985: "If our Western friends should fail to display the necessary resourcefulness," after the Ayatollah dies, Iran will be faced with either of two predicaments: "a second Lebanon, only bigger and more dangerous; or within a few months, or two years at most, it will become one more satellite of communist Russia."

BUT THE Middle East periphery was not the only part of the Third World where Israel's involvement had strategic ramifications. Indeed, as evidence mounted regarding its military sales in Central America and Africa in the early 1980s, Israel was said to have become "the Cuba of the United States." Just as Cuba played proxy for the Soviet Union in various parts of the Third World (Angola and Ethiopia are two examples), so Israel seemed to be performing tasks the United States could not afford to undertake. The analogy is flawed, of course. Israel did not dispatch troops or launch revolutionary crusades as Cuba has done at the Soviets' behest. Israel sought to serve the needs of its own arms industry, as well as fulfill its own diplomatic aspirations. But Israel was able to pull chestnuts out of the fire for the United States by acting where U.S. policy was hampered by indecision or by legislative constraints.

Take Israel's role in Zaire, the largest country in equatorial Africa. Zaire is not a national state, but a conglomerate of ethnic groups, cultures, and languages. This empire, the size of Western Europe, was born out of a colonial folly. For the first ten years or so of its history, it was in a state of continuing crisis. Even after stabilizing under the iron fist of General (later Marshal) Mobutu Sese Seko as of the late 1960s, Zaire had major troubles to contend with.

Mobutu was undoubtedly a most unsavory ally. Israelis had reason to wonder whether befriending him was a fitting sequel to their idealism of the 1960s, when they had been as concerned about the welfare of Africa's peoples as they were now with Mobutu's fate. But to the architects of Israel's regional strategies, Africa was an extension of the peripheral doctrine. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, used to speak of the "African bridge" Israel would ultimately cross to make peace with its Arab neighbors.

In the late 1960s African states had come under increasing Arab pressure to break with Israel. These states imagined they would be beneficiaries of petro-Islam's largess. Zaire's capitulation, a few days before the Yom Kippur War broke out, came as a particularly severe blow to the Israelis, given the extent of their earlier cooperation with Mobutu.

In 1977 and again in 1978 Zaire was invaded from neighboring Angolan territory by former mercenaries who had battled the central government as far back as the 1960s. They had first been aided by the right-wing dictatorship of Portugal, which ruled over Angola until the mid-1970s; later they were backed by an ostensibly independent An-

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gola that had turned into a Soviet-Cuban protectorate.

The few thousand invaders had little trouble smashing Zaire's army. On two occasions within a period of 15 months, outsiders had to come to Mobutu's rescue—first Moroccan paratroopers dropped from French planes, then French and Belgian paratroopers. The two invasions came to be known as Shaba I and Shaba II, respectively, after the Zairian province Shaba (formerly Katanga), where they took place.

Given the display of Mobutu's stunning weakness, it was only a matter of time before Shaba III. Mobutu was not a natural protégé of the Western democracies. Even by the most generous African criteria, he set a few unusual records for corruption. A report by the representative of the World Bank in Zaire, leaked to the press in 1982, revealed that Mobutu's private bank accounts abroad did not fall far below his country's external debts.

In 1981 the Reagan administration's attempt to obtain approval for military aid to Zaire faced enormous difficulty in Congress. The objections were sober and weighty, and not easily given to refutation. Indeed, there are times when a political system must decide what kinds of friends it wants for itself.

In 1981 Mobutu's growing vulnerability made him reconsider his expulsion of the Israelis. Beginning in late 1981, Israel provided Mobutu with services the United States was in no position to extend. (Thanks to a parliamentary system of government, Israeli policy-makers, like their counterparts in France and Britain, are not accountable to a legislature that scrutinizes their military aid policies and other covert activities.) Senior Israeli advisers drafted blueprints for the reconstruction of Zaire's army. Instructors sent from elite Israeli military units proceeded to rebuild from scratch the division charged with defending Zaire's border with Angola. Others went out into the jungle to recruit military men for Mobutu's praetorian guard to thwart a possible Shaba III in Kinshasa, the capital.

The sight of an Israeli flag hoisted again in Kinshasa sent a shiver of excitement through the spines of Israel's policy-makers. They believed that their restored diplomatic status in Zaire would facilitate similar comebacks in other African countries. Indeed, Zaire's example was later followed by Liberia, the Ivory Coast, and Cameroon.

THE SITUATION in Guatemala that prompted Israeli involvement bore more than a few similarities to Zaire's. In 1977 the Carter administration halted military aid to Guatemala. The reasons here, too, were worthy ones. Ever since a CIA-orchestrated coup had overturned the country's elected left-wing government in 1954, Guatemala's rulers ranked in the human rights department with Argentina's Videla, Chile's Pinochet, and Haiti's Duvaliers. In the late 1970s Guatemala was engulfed in a wide-scale guerrilla insurgency. Neither its inept army nor the oligarchy's death squads were able to stem the tide. Guatemala's situation increasingly began to resemble that of Nicaragua in 1978, when a popular uprising led by the Sandinistas broke out against the ruling Somoza family.

Guatemala's guerrillas were nobody's flunkies. Their war was not an offshoot of "international communism," but one that genuinely mobilized the grievances of the long-oppressed Indian majority. According to statistics from the U.S. State Department, eight out of ten guerrilla fighters were Indians. Still, the alternative offered by the insurgents to a political system described as one of "organized violence" was not a social democracy, Costa Rican-style, but a dictatorship of the extreme left. During the '70s there was no viable middle way in Guatemala.

Beginning in 1977, Israel became Guatemala's principal purveyor of arms and military know-how. "Israel was the only country willing to help us fight the guerrillas," General Bendicto Lucas García, a former Guatemalan chief of staff and defense minister, told me in December 1985. This is not entirely true: France, Switzerland, Argentina, and others were also substantially involved. But Israel did sell Guatemala transport planes and helicopter spare parts. It also supplied the army with a sophisticated communications system and taught it to zero in on the guerrillas by intercepting their frequencies. Israel built Guatemala's first ammunitions plant, as well as two computer centers to help the army's general staff coordinate the movement of troops on the battlefield.

Following a bloody campaign that cost the lives of some 10,000 Indian peasants, the new army rendered the guerrillas harmless. In January 1986 it felt confident enough and tired enough to hand over the reins of power, or at least the semblance of power, to an elected civilian president, Marco Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo. The verdict is still out on Cerezo, who is about to mark the first anniversary of his presidency.

An Israeli may wonder whether ruthless Latin *golpistas* (military strongmen) are the Jewish state's natural friends. Insofar as American interests in Central America are concerned, however, Israel did exactly what the United States was incapable of doing—the untouchables cleaning the Brahmans' stables, if you will. One may wonder how Central America might have looked if the Reagan administration had had to subsidize the moral equal of our Founding Fathers not only in Nicaragua but in Guatemala as well.

SOME MONTHS AGO, Elliott Abrams, the assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, tried to sum it all up in the form of an equation. There is no difference, he told me, between Israel and other beleaguered friends and allies of the United States, no difference between Israel and Thailand, which has to contend with Vietnam, between Israel and Pakistan, which must cope with the Soviets in Afghanistan, or between Israel and the *contras*.

But there is a difference. Thailand, Pakistan, and the *contras* can hardly fend for themselves. Israel is not only fending for itself but also helping those "other beleaguered friends and allies" of the United States. That is why Israel today is America's most dependable and effective strategic asset in the Third World. Its role in the Iran affair confirms the point. □

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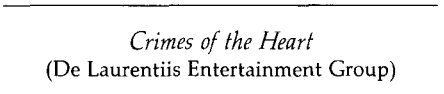
STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

The Three Sisters



Crimes of the Heart
(De Laurentiis Entertainment Group)

They live in a Mississippi town. Lenny (short for Lenora), the oldest, who is just 30, has had one sexual experience but was too embarrassed to see the man again because someone told him about her shrunken ovary. Meg, younger, is a failing singer-actress who tried Hollywood and was driven by frustration to a psychiatric ward. Babe, youngest, has just shot her husband and wounded him seriously because he mistreated her 15-year-old black lover.

Yet *Crimes of the Heart* seems comic. Beth Henley has adapted her play for the screen with careful balance. Balance was prime because some condensation was unavoidable and so was some "opening up"—leaving the play's one set, Lenny Magrath's kitchen. Between those opposed motions, contraction and expansion, Henley has maintained the poise of her exceptionally good play. I miss the lilting circumlocution of the original. For instance, in the play a woman greets a man she hasn't seen for a while: "Well, how are you doing? How in the world are you doing?" In the film we get only the second line. But Henley has added some nice touches, like a mumbling old uncle who steals cookies behind his strict daughter's back. Best of all, her screenplay, though with a somewhat altered silhouette, keeps the braided deception and truth of the original. The script seems a lacy comedy about three Deep South eccentrics; but it counterpoints the eccentricities with mental disturbances, which are handled jocularly but are nonetheless mental disturbances. Babe wanted to kill her husband; it was only her poor aim that saved his life. We are meant to sympathize because he's a pompous brute and possibly because when he lay bleeding on the floor she offered him lemonade. This is funny—in the film we actually see it, in flashback—but only because it's kept in Babe's perspective and language. (She calls from the kitchen to her prostrate husband inside: "Zackery, I've made some lemonade. Can you use a glass?") As for Lenny and Meg, besides their own peculiarities, they view Babe's action as if it were a social gaffe that they must help to cover up.

We are given some ground for the sisters' oddities: they were all badly shocked by their mother's suicide some years before. (Even this is a canted tragedy: their mother hanged her cat along with herself.) The mother apparently did it because the father had deserted her, but Lenny drops a dark hint that the father was a molestation in more than one way. She says, with quiet hate: "Really, with his white teeth, Daddy was such a bastard." In short, although laughter is always simmering along at the top, the undercurrents are shadowy and cold. Henley's play and screenplay are about psychopaths whose psychopathy is all the more dangerous because it comes wrapped in laughter and charm. This was the gist of such otherwise different films as *Jules and Jim* and the recent *Betty Blue*—illness in romantic trappings.

Part of Henley's point is to show us how easily we can be beguiled by those trappings. She even ends with the three sisters laughing over a huge belated birthday cake for Lenny, a finish, insofar as it is one, of sham happiness. A more important part of the point is that the sisters *themselves* have cast their minds and manners into comic strophes. All through their lives, the macabre has persisted. (Meg's favorite reading after their mother's suicide was a medical textbook, *Diseases of the Skin*, with colored illustrations.) They have fashioned for themselves a comic mode of existence. *Crimes of the Heart* is in a sense a collaboration between the author and her characters to fabricate appealing disguises for mental dislocations.

A few weeks ago, reviewing the film made from Henley's original screenplay, *Nobody's Fool*, I hoped that *Crimes of the Heart*, then forthcoming, would be better directed. Disappointment now—particularly bitter because Bruce Beresford did such strong, sure directing of *Tender Mercies*. Here he fails on at least two counts. He has no central idea of the script, no conceptual design. Consequently he seizes each scene, one after the other, and tries to break it open in some ostentatiously cinematic way. The very first shot is from a closet as Lenny takes out some dresses. Why? Why the fretful editing as she moves around the room packing a bag? (It takes too long to learn that she is packing Babe's clothes in Babe's house to bring them to her own home. The opening muddle is deepened because, for the first few minutes, people's names are carelessly spoken.) This unease nags the whole film; very often there are quick alternating cuts between intense close-ups and long shots that only make us aware of a leaping camera. Beresford strains at odd angles on the stairway to get all three sisters, in different places, into the same shot. He labors comic moments with close-ups of half-eaten chocolates and of feet scurrying up a woodpile. And he misses no chance to harm the picture by laying on wistfulness and rueful music and misty lighting—for instance, a tearful farewell to the 15-year-old youth

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Little Shop of Horrors. Exceptionally clever editing and directing make a mild musical about a strange flower shop into a good entertainment. (Reviewed 1/26/87)

Platoon. Written and directed by Oliver Stone, who was there, this film about Vietnam combat is gritty, pungent, strong. A few soft spots; but mostly it's a gripping reminder. (1/19/87)

Sid and Nancy. You may care little about punk rock; still, the lives and deaths of Sid Vicious and his girlfriend will very likely grip you in this well-acted, well-made chronicle. (10/27/86)

Thérèse. Alain Cavalier's quiet biography of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is beautiful. In every way. A work of art. (12/29/86)

SK

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when he is hustled out of town on a bus.

The main strands of the story are Lenny's ultimate summoning of courage to telephone the man with whom she spent one night; Meg's attempt to straighten herself out after her Hollywood disaster; and Babe's efforts, aided by a young lawyer who likes her, to avoid prison for the shooting. By far the best performance of the three comes from Sissy Spacek as Babe. Admittedly it's the best part: not the longest but the one of widest range, with subtler transitions and with more zooming-plummeting emotions; but Spacek makes the most of every chance. In *'night, Mother* her performance was all that kept the film from falling off the screen. Here she grows even further, with focused understanding and tone, vitalized by imagination. Jessica Lange, smashingly attractive as Meg, plays too much on the conventional line of the show-biz flop, strident and shrugging. Her performance is good enough in that way, but it's not particularized with any touch of the woman so driven to inner discomfort by her mother's suicide that she landed eventually in a mental ward. Diane Keaton, as Lenny, works energetically, but she seems to be pounding at the outside of the woman, trying to get in, thump after thump.

The sterling performance that might be overlooked in this film about three sisters is by Sam Shepard as Meg's former lover, now a husband and father, now limping. (The film scants the fact that his limp came about because of his devotion to Meg in a hurricane.) Shepard captures perfectly the taciturn, wry resignation of a man who used to be a small-town rooster but whose youth is gone and whose tail feathers droop as he sets himself for the long monotonous drag through the decades to the grave.

Henley's case is an odd one. Usually in the earlier years of a career, lack of fulfillment in a writer can be laid to immaturity. But Henley has done fulfilled work: this screenplay and its original, her play *The Miss Firecracker Contest*, and her screenplay *Nobody's Fool* are authentic, unique, rounded. It is her productions on the New York stage and on screen that have been unfulfilled.

ROBERT BRUSTEIN ON THEATER

Snarls From The Bedclothes

Confined to bed for the last seven days with a pneumonia caused by one of those stubborn viral imports from Taiwan, I was permitted to contemplate only theatrical events that came via television, radio, and the newspapers. A high fever always puts you in a state of conflict with your bedclothes. But if I thrashed about enough to leave my Simmons looking like the Meuse-Argonne, this was partly a result of the way I reacted to these media irritants. Here follows a short list of what has been raising my temperature lately, which you are perfectly free to dismiss as proceeding from a heat-oppressed brain.

Reagan's Acting. I resent hearing Ronald Reagan described as a "former actor." What he has always been—even as a leading man in Hollywood—is an Announcer. That he is one of the most persuasive the entertainment industry has ever produced makes this distinction no less important. Good announcers—Jack Benny's Don Wilson and Johnny Carson's Ed McMahon are examples—often join the banter, but they are basically middlemen between the sponsors and the show. Reagan doesn't act a role. He sells a product—or at best he acts the role of someone selling a product. Reagan first hit his stride as front man for "General Electric Theater," not only introducing (and sometimes performing in) the homogenized playlets that followed the commercials, but touring us around the whole General Electric inventory: refrigerators, radios, lamps, toasters, etc. Anyone who remembers him from those days recognizes where he first developed what has since become known as the Presidential Style. When he proudly displayed the freezer compartment, his baritone rumbling over the new automatic icemaker, Reagan had already assumed all the skills and talents of the Super TV Salesman. The crinkled smiling eyes and waggish shake of the head before a self-mocking anecdote; the sententious crooning delivery, spoken with just enough hesitation to make each phrase seem invented; the emphatic cadences closing in on the low low price of the product; even his walk and his wave—a musclebound amble, the arm lifted above the bulging pectorals that appear to have been just released from a session with the barbells—all date from the '50s and his marketing of GE household wares.

That walk, by the way, suggests the one real role with which Reagan identifies, other than weekend cowboy: commander in chief. I bet he would have killed to take George C. Scott's place in the movie *Patton*. Military bands, especially playing "Hail to the Chief," seem to start his glands secreting. What a delicious opportunity to march, strut, wave, smile, stand stiffly erect with hand over heart and eyes directed Godward, and, best of all, administer a snappy salute to the flag, a visiting dignitary, or a Boy Scout leader.

The question then arises: Is Reagan formulating policy or only announcing it? Yes, one knows how fiercely he feels about Nicaragua and Star Wars, how devoted he is to scrapping federally funded social programs, how much he supports the idea of a balanced budget and a revised tax code, how committed he is to fighting terrorists everywhere (except where they originate). But what is his responsibility—to devise such plans or to study the script he's handed and then deliver it to the public? I rather doubt, for example, that Reagan could have framed his celebrated characterization of the *contras* as "the moral equivalent of the Founding Fathers"—a status to which he has now elevated the "national hero" Colonel North. That literary gem must have been invented by someone else (possibly criminal division chief Stephen Trott, who recently declared in his own voice that "Ed Meese deserves a medal"). This habit of conferring historical immortality on anyone who kills, steals, rapes, cheats, lies, or breaks the law in the interests of the administration is perhaps its most cheeky innovation. But such things continue to be said in violent contradiction of moral reality only because our Amiable Announcer knows precisely how to say them, with just the right unctuous sincerity, with just enough throaty sentiment and conviction.

So I believe Nancy Reagan when she says her husband knew nothing about the covert transfer of funds to the *contras*—nothing there to announce. The

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primary reason he was told about the plan to liberate hostages in return for arms was so that he could broadcast it, if not by the election then by Christmas time—the season when all his equally likeable colleagues in advertising, public relations, and the media were also announcing yuletide greetings, gifts, and bargains, while secretly trying to sell us something we didn't want and didn't need.

the CIVIL warS. When I heard that the *New York Times* had sent Donal Henahan to cover the opening night of the Rome section (first performed in Rome) of *the CIVIL warS* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, I could have written his review for him. Henahan's contempt for the director, Robert Wilson, and the composer, Philip Glass, is already on record. What then could have possessed the *Times* to dispatch such a declared enemy of advanced art to such an important postmodernist occasion when there were critics on the staff, John Rockwell and Frank Rich and William Honan are examples, perfectly capable of understanding and appreciating its intentions? Predictably, Henahan treated the work as some kind of corrosive acid poured on the holy shroud of Western artistic traditions. But as Matthew Epstein argues in the current issue of *Daedalus*, it is precisely this kind of blinkered (and powerfully positioned) criticism that has made New York look so provincial as an opera capital in comparison to most German cities, Wales, Scotland, and even Santa Fe and Chicago.

My illness prevented me from seeing the Rome *CIVIL warS* during its run. But we staged a piece of it (the epilogue) in Cambridge, along with the Cologne section and *The Knee Plays* (for which David Byrne wrote the music) from the same monumental work. I've also heard portions of Glass's score on tape. For Henahan to call this music "numbingly primitive . . . incidental and trivial"—or to say that the "work . . . makes as little sense as its name"—is virtually to abdicate the obligations of critical perception for the luxury of discharging bile and spleen. I happen to believe that Glass is the finest American composer after Gershwin, one who, under Indian influences, has restored an ecstatic lyricism and passionate rhythm to advanced music without losing its experimental thrust. (My high estimate of Wilson's work is also on record.) I know this opinion is not shared by many music critics. But the issue is not whether we opinionators agree on individual theatrical or musical tastes, or even whether the Rome *CIVIL warS* is equal to other sections of this 12-hour work. Rather, it is whether contemporary criticism is proving itself equal to what is happening in contemporary culture. Following 25 years of severe drought between 1950 and 1975, when it sometimes looked as if the performing arts (dance excepted) were going under, its great figures yielding to death or old age and no significant heirs in sight, we are now experiencing a great outpouring of talent in music, opera, theater, and performance art, right here in these United States. That this talent still has to go to Europe to achieve recognition suggests that American criticism has not kept pace with its achievements—worse, that criticism has fallen into the conservative slough of our politics, hunkering down on what is safe and secure, putting up barricades before the temples of established values. The paradox is that while the critics remain hostile to this artistry, the audiences are beginning to respond, so that perhaps for the first time in history the avant-garde is proving a popular rather than a coterie phenomenon. As for those who scandalous-

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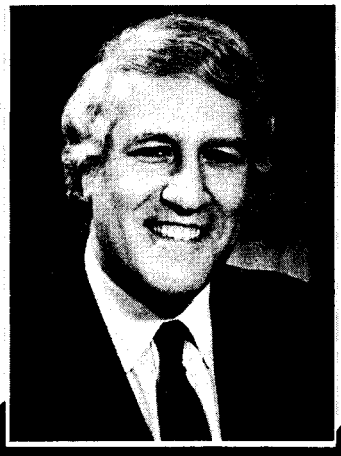

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ly continue to pour such scorn and derision on the heads of modern artists, I advise them to reread Yeats's "On Those Who Hated *The Playboy of the Western World*." What they are exposing is a strain of fratricidal hatred—an extension, in short, of *CIVIL warS*, as denoted in that bizarre typography Donal Henahan made so little effort to understand.

Simon and Frayn. When critics trash the genuine artists in our midst, they have to find some substitutes. In the theater, the current heroes are Neil Simon and Michael Frayn. Loath to sound like all those people who know they hate Robert Wilson's work even when they haven't seen it, I'll try to avoid comment on Simon's *Broadway Bound*. I certainly noticed Simon's determination to deepen the sitcom in his last piece, *Biloxi Blues*, and I expect to find the same commendable effort here. But is Simon worthy of being elevated into the pantheon of the blessed just because he is now trying to leaven his one-liners with good honest sentiment? Tom Stoppard was afforded the same awestruck deferential treatment after a few of his characters were seen to weep in *The Real Thing*. Who says a critic's heart is made of stone?

Frayn is being praised again, this time for having taken an early and presumably useless piece of Chekhov juvenilia and transformed it into a usable theatrical vehicle called *Wild Honey*. I can speak with a little more authority about this production, since I actually *saw* it in Los Angeles before the New York opening, and I can say without hesitation that it's unbearable. The play already enjoys a number of perfectly decent adaptations under such titles as *Platonov* and *Don Juan in the Russian Manner*, the most effective being Alex Szogyi's *A Country Scandal*. This one—having excised what its star, Ian McKellen, in a radio interview called all the "philosophical, pedantic stuff"—turns the play into an artificial sex comedy, a bubble-headed Feydeau farce.

I don't want to sound too custodial here; the play is hardly a neglected masterpiece. Chekhov destroyed the original manuscript when it was rejected by a Russian actress; what we have is a voluminous early draft, more valuable to scholars than to spectators. Still, one has to watch the damned thing on stage, with everyone circling each other like windup china figures and Ian McKellen preening about like a self-infatuated dandy. One can only attribute his success as a philanderer to the fact that his women like to be barked at; his Platonov is an exercise not in acting but in voice placement. A lot of perfectly competent American actors have been stranded by this concept of Russian aristocrats as exiles from English playing fields, and by Christopher Morahan's persistently mechanical direction. Recognizing the power of old Pearl White thrillers, Frayn puts a choo-choo train on stage and makes Platonov commit suicide by throwing himself, smiling, onto the tracks. For all I cared about any of these artificial people, they could all have been run over by a train.

The Emerson the Emerson boom forgot.

HUMAN, ALL TOO INHUMAN

BY RICHARD POIRIER

IT IS BEING called the revival of Emerson, the Emerson boom. It is going on not only in departments of literature, as at Yale in the work of Harold Bloom, but in departments of philosophy, in the work of Stanley Cavell at Harvard; in departments of political science, with George Kateb at Amherst; among broad-gauged critics like Irving Howe, in his recent *The American Newness: Culture and Politics in the Age of Emerson*; among novelist-philosophers like William Gass; and among poets like John Hollander and Douglas Crase. More telling perhaps, as a portent of the future, is the participation of some formidably bright younger critics, who are able to find in Emerson (as Howe is not prepared to do) an anticipation of theories that have become fashionable under mostly European provenance. Taken together, all this may amount to the emergence of an authentic American critical practice that will take its cues from a line that runs from Emerson through his pragmatist successors Charles Peirce, John Dewey, and William James, on to the work of the redoubtable Kenneth Burke. It will be a kind of criticism that has heretofore seemed merely disruptive or peripheral to institutional forms of criticism, whether journalistic or academic.

Of course a "revived" Emerson has always been there waiting in his sentences. Much now being said of him was anticipated years ago by Burke, by Stephen Whicher, by James Cox, by Joel Porte, by this writer. The inevitable question, then, is why now? Emerson's writings certainly haven't changed. Why has this revival been so long in coming? The answers provide a rather embarrassing chapter in American cultural self-consciousness.

Surely one factor has been the exhaustion of T. S. Eliot's version of modernism, and of the Christianizing New Criticism that went with it. Both depended on a catastrophic view of contemporary history, which had the effect of mythologizing literary structures (and literary criticism itself) as a source of cultural values otherwise supposedly lost to us. This was a view wholly antithetical to Emerson's principal modern successors in poetry, Frost and Stevens. Another factor is that the boom probably had to await the dilution of American literary colonialism, a belated national willingness, as evidenced by the success of the Library of America, to take cultural possession of our own literature. Having lost most of their Anglophilic pretensions in the face of the overwhelming achievements of American (as opposed to British) literature in this century, American academic literati turned, it is true, to Barthean, Derridean, Foucauldean jargons; but by a curious reversal this same importation of theory has helped gain recognition for the intensely problematic workings of language in earlier American writing, for what I would call the essential postmodernism not only of Emerson, but of Melville, Poe, and Dickinson. Critics of American literature now have fully available to them the interpretive tools that Emerson has long offered. They have come to recog-

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nize how much he himself was at odds even with his own vocabulary, with such words as "nature" and "self-reliance"—upon which he was supposed to have uncritically depended.

The boom does not mean that a single or even consistent image of Emerson will emerge. It means only that he cannot any longer be treated as anything less than the great and difficult writer he is, as a writer who has already anticipated any degree of sophistication that might be brought to him. It is no longer permissible to go to him as to some department store that might or might not supply your list of household needs, as John Updike did in a sulky piece on Emerson that appeared a few years ago in the *New Yorker*. You may, after John Dewey and Stanley Cavell, read Emerson as a great American philosopher, or, with Harold Bloom, as a great experiential critic, but to read him as anything less is to be exposed with Updike as merely negligent. His requirements are severe. But so are Locke's and Hume's, Kant's and Goethe's, so are Heidegger's—in all of whose company Emerson belongs. To borrow a remark of R. P. Blackmur's, he "gives us techniques for finding trouble in ourselves and in the world . . . as if to make trouble had become a creative habit of the general mind." Emerson himself had a way of putting it that is equally satisfactory. "The mind," he says in "Experience," "goes antagonizing on."

THERE IS no "optative" Emerson, as against some later antithetical or skeptical one. They are of a piece. The first continuously creates the dissatisfactions or antagonisms that characterize the second. If he looks expectantly to the future for transcendence, for transformations, it is from an inveterate suspicion of anything completed in the past, including anything even now being completed, like the sentences he is writing or the son to whose birth he is witness. Texts, of life or of art, the grammar of a poem or of a human shape, excite in him an only impatient affection. They are an incentive to search for the energy or the power that created them, and that now needs to be rescued, or so it seems to him, from their embrace.

The Emerson who warns us in "The American Scholar" that cultural inheritance should induce not reverence, but only the motive for displacing its monuments, is the same Emerson whose style constantly interrogates the terminologies and formulas that it seems superficially to endorse. His writing offers no solutions to anything; but it does exemplify in its movements a mode of action within the constraints of language that can be immensely instructive for the conduct of life, including public life. The Emerson boom will only become an Emersonian boon when it has substantially erased any simple expectations, especially as these involve the much-vaunted ideas of American optimism and American individualism. "Everything," he writes, "teaches transition, transference, metamorphosis: therein is human power, in transference, not in creation; & therein is human destiny, not in longevity but in removal. We dive & reappear in new places."

In such a scheme of things, there can be only a disputed place and function for that individualism of which Emerson and his followers are the reputed champions. While Emerson agrees with William James that individuals can make important additions to reality even in their mere descriptions of things, he exhibits an indifference bordering on antagonism to any individualistic effort to appropriate such contributions to one's own credit. Whatever an individual adds immediately becomes part of an already existing flux. The origins of the addition are thereby relocated, taken away from the individual claimant and ascribed to a mysterious, pre-existent, and commonly shared form of "nature" or "power." Linguistic codes are inherited in this scenario no less than are genetic ones. Though the number of possible recombinations is infinite, any one of them on its emergence reveals that it was always potentially there. "Every book is a quotation, and every house is a quotation out of all forests and mines and stone quarries, and every man is a quotation from all his ancestors."

This last quotation, from Emerson's essay "Plato," is obviously at odds with the kind of individualism usually attributed to him, as if, when he more famously exhorts us in *Nature* to "build therefore your own world," he could be ignorant of the fact that the materials must already be on hand, especially if one is building with words. Emerson writes from a position that does not permit him ever to be satisfied with the representative value of anything he names, be it a person, a text, or his own key terms. Everything is a quotation because the origin of all things is to be found in an ever-circulating "power" for which no object or person is a satisfactory embodiment. This power may pass through an individual; but the person as such is expendable. ("I marry you for better but not for worse," he writes in the *Journals* some five years after his second marriage. "I marry impersonally.") So, too, with all literary texts. "Criticism," he says at another point in the *Journals*, "must be transcendental, that is, must consider literature ephemeral & easily entertain the supposition of its entire disappearance."

EMERSON could entertain the supposition not only that literature but that every human creation could disappear. This includes his own writing, in which his sentences notoriously fracture, disown, and contradict each other; and it includes his most beloved and firstborn son, Waldo, who died of scarlet fever at the age of five in 1842. He might have said, to recall Ben Jonson's poem on a similar loss, that Waldo was his own "best piece of poetry." And yet Emerson will admit in "Experience," one of his greatest essays, that "in the death of my son, now more than two years ago, I seem to have lost a beautiful estate,—no more. I cannot get it nearer to me. . . . I grieve that grief can teach me nothing, nor carry me one step into real nature." This need not be taken, as it often is, as a refusal or inability to mourn. His anguish is evident enough in his letters, in the poem "Threnody," in the testimony of friends, and in the *Journals*, where he reports in March 1842, two months after Waldo's death, that "the chrysalis which he brought in with care & tenderness & gave to his Mother to keep is still alive and he most beautiful of the children of men is not here." In this same entry, however, there are hints of the peculiar stoicism that will get articulated in "Experience": "I comprehend nothing of this fact but its bitterness. Explanations I have none, consolations none that rises out of the fact itself; only diversion; only oblivion of this & pursuit of new objects."

The essay "Experience" confirms the intimations in the *Journals*: that Emerson felt himself compelled by a power whose urgency overwhelms its own creations and, along with them, any monumentalizing of their loss. He is most impressive when his emotions are least domestic, as when he disparages those "moods in which we court suffering, in the hope that here, at least, we shall find reality, sharp peaks and edges of truth." He goes

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on to admit that "the only thing grief has taught me, is to know how shallow it is. That, like all the rest, plays about the surface, and never introduces me into the reality, for contact with which, we would even pay the costly price of sons and lovers."

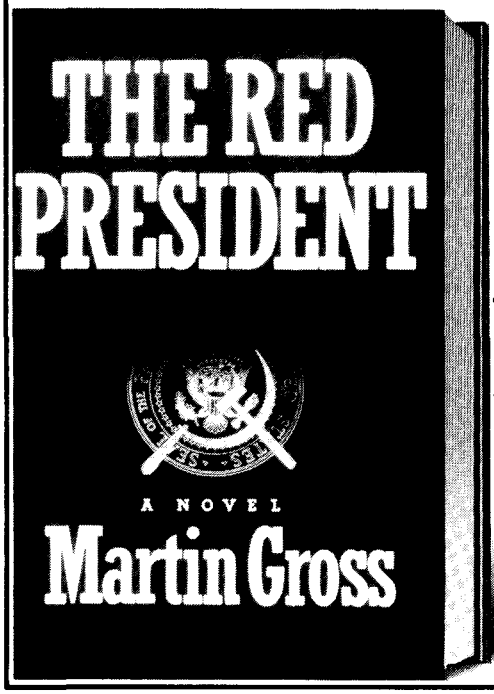
This is strong stuff. But Emerson's rhetoric disguises something stronger, something still more frightful about him: that he indeed already knows, and is in contact with, the reality and the truth of which he speaks. He is saying only that his or anyone's losses and bereavements are not a sufficient clue to that reality and that truth. To an awesome degree, Emerson chose to align himself with the very processes in which creativity and destruction ("oblivion of this & pursuit of new objects") are so closely allied, so dependent one on the other, as to be fused in what he repeatedly calls "power." His own power expresses itself, then, not simply in a willing acceptance of losses, but in his recognition that the benefits of the whole movement of loss and of gain cannot be known. There is no important distinction to be made, moreover, between the fate of persons and the fate of words.

CONSIDER how Emerson describes his relation to the birth of Waldo. In an entry in his *Journals* dated October 21, 1836, he writes:

> Last night at 11 o'clock, a son was born to me. Blessed child! a lovely wonder to me, and which makes the Universe look friendly to me. How remote my knowledge, how alien, yet how kind does it make the Cause of Causes appear! The stimulated curiosity of the father sees the graces & instincts which exists, indeed, in every babe, but unnoticed in others; the right to see all, know all, to examine nearly, distinguishes this relation & endears this child. Otherwise I see nothing in it of mine; I am no conscious party to any feature, any function, any perfection I behold in it. I seem to be merely the brute occasion of its being & nowise attaining to the dignity even of a second cause no more than I taught it to suck the breast.

Emerson here looks at his son, as he looks most of the time at himself: as a "fact" to be studied. The child is less the incorporation of the father (or the unmentioned mother) than of something remote from both, belonging as much to the Universe, within which it exists as a fragile and momentary form. "Now am I Pygmalion," he says a little later on. Anything a human being creates—a statue, a child, a book—teaches him that it is

The men in Red Square have a dream. The man in the White House is about to make their dream come true.



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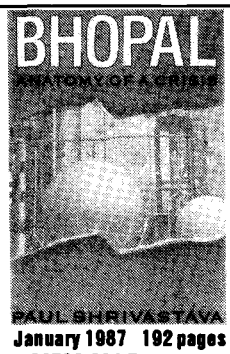

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not his alone; it comes also from the dead. Indeed, insistence on individual possession of such things, including self-possession, is for Emerson an immensely complex repetition of original sin.

This becomes dazzlingly evident when we put into conjunction a series of passages he did not intend to conjoin that together reveal an obsessive concern that Emerson himself, by the transgressive act of writing (and of parental possessiveness), might be repeating the sin of the first parents. For a start, there are his comments in *Representative Men* on the ambitions of Plato:

> He has clapped copyright on the world. This is the ambition of individualism. But the mouthful proves too large. *Boa constrictor* has good will to eat it, but he is foiled. He falls abroad in the attempt; and biting, gets strangled: the bitten world holds the biter fast by his own teeth. There he perishes: unconquered nature lives on and forgets him. So it fares with all: so must it fare with Plato. In view of eternal nature, Plato turns out to be philosophical exercitations.

This sounds, at least superficially, like a derisive self-criticism of Emerson's own dream of world engorgement. Five years before the first version of this passage appeared in the *Journals*, he reported in October 1840: "I dreamed that I floated at will in the great Ether, and I saw this world floating also not far off, but diminished to the size of an apple. Then an angel took it in his hand & brought it to me and said 'This must thou eat.' And I ate the world."

EMERSON'S mind is so saturated with mythologies of origin, with the transits back and forth between human and mythic identities of the self, that these two passages, instead of contradicting one another, are actually complementary. That is, the man-as-serpent who bites into and strangles on the world, though a representative of a fatal kind of individualism, is also an analogue to Emerson himself during his dream of eating the world. Both figures are versions of Adam and Eve. He knew that "dreams are true to nature," as he writes in the *Journals* for 1839, "& like monstrous formations . . . show the law. Their double consciousness, their sub- & ob-jectiveness is the wonder," and he therefore did not feel the need to say, especially in the privacy of his journals, that the dream he has had is an example of what he calls "transference": of himself into Adam, Eve, and the Fall.

Emerson nearly always declines to signal such shifts of identity. He is convinced, quite rightly, that the shifts are, more often than not, the rule. Thus they ought to be treated, along with dreams, as an expected part of daily existence. Even as he dreams of eating the world, it is not only the subject of the dream, but the fact of dreaming, that proves how much already within us are residues of the first and all subsequent parents. The forbidden fruit is knowledge of the world; it is the desire to take the world into oneself, to make the created Universe into a part of man and not the other way around. The Fall is already implicit in this desire, because the desire could not exist if man felt comfortably at one with the world. In his willful degree of otherness, his invention of individualism, man discovers also his consciousness of death. To have claimed Waldo as entirely his own on the basis of physical parentage would have been to admit then and there, at his birth, that the eventual death of the son would remove him, and his father, from the links of existence. The child must exist instead as part of the everlasting phenomenon of the Cause of Causes.

THESE IMAGES of biting and eating, of engorging and strangulation, become all the more resonant when joined to an astounding entry in the *Journals* for 1845: "Eve softly with her womb / Bit him to death." Since Eve, like Emerson, like all of us, is mythologically of and from Adam, his death in her womb can be considered coincidental with our birth out of it. By this account we are in every sense quotations of Adam, out of his side and out of her womb; and the mythic elaborations among these passages is a parable of the artistic, literary, and human "production" that we have already heard him describe in its relations to past and future. Mythologizing is a fact of human nature.

Emersonians, no less than some English Romantics, sometimes worry that the mythologizing power of writing might constitute an aggravated assault on the natural world, an attempt to violate its integrity by taking meanings from it. But they like to convince themselves that their work with language is also, as William James suggests, something that "works" *for* the world, that writing can enhance the mythological power that is also the due inheritance of writing. How, an Emersonian asks, do I invest the inheritance so as to increase it? How do I manage the estate of poetry so that, besides being an heir, I can also create some heirs? It is possible to be anxious about this; and also, as with Whitman in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," happily bumptious about it. But Wallace Stevens, most notable among Whitman's heirs, was not so confident that he, in turn, would leave recognizable traces of his passage, which is the complaint of his "A Postcard from the Volcano." The hope that some trace of your part in life will remain to be discovered in the future presupposes a relation of past to present not unique to poetry. There is evidence of it everywhere one looks; it is part of practical economy in every form of human life. "Therein is human power, in transference not in creation, and therein is human destiny, not in longevity but in removal"—if this describes, as I maintain, the essential nature of literary production, it also describes more ordinary forms of human enterprise.

IT IS NOT surprising, therefore, that Emerson, no less than William James, has some difficulty explaining what he means by individual human "acts": even while an act might reveal an individual human presence, it is at the same time submerged in the continuities that flow through it. Since human consciousness initiated a separation of the human mind from the "flow" of nature, a separation called "culture," how can expressions of that consciousness, especially in such a fabricated structure as literature, also be an expression of nature? Analogously, how and why should an individual whose very knowledge of himself depends on "communities of opinion" set out to resist or to transform those communities? How does anyone's idea of himself or herself ever get into words when the act of writing always "betrays" its distance from the experiences the words propose to represent? This peculiar situation, which was quite specifically connected to literary composition by Wordsworth in Book II of *The Prelude*, is frequently described by Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman as a problem of "doubleness."

Emerson's writing, even more than Wordsworth's, proceeds from the sensation of self-detachment and self-monitoring, of being suspended over various versions of yourself that can become, in any passage of talk or writing or recollection, superimposed one on another. You are forever elsewhere as you go about your daily business. This is especially the case if your business is writ-

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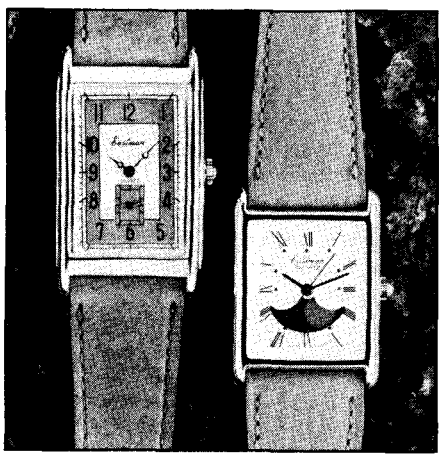

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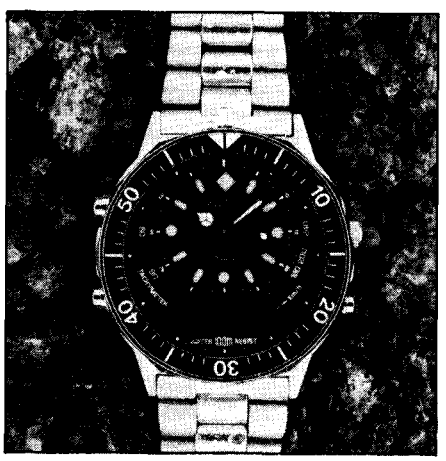

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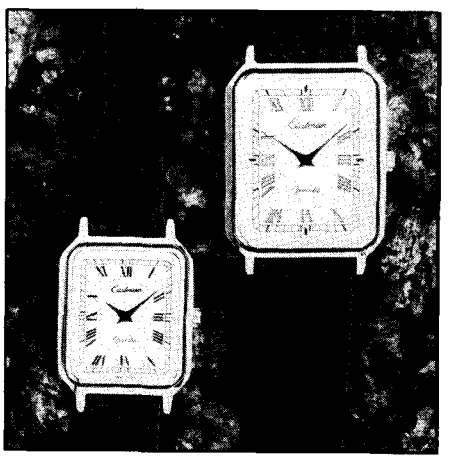

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ing, which is almost invariably about moments other than the present moment of composition. You are present to some earlier version of yourself that stretches back to ghostlier demarcations, beyond the "frame" or limit of your bodily life. The self can be located here and now, however, not by reflection, but, so far as Emerson and William James are concerned, by virtue of "acts." These acts are variously named—"resistance," "antagonism," "transition," "abandonment." None has to do with compliance. They are *re*active to any particular mode of expression, even one you have yourself chosen, that threatens to fix identity or to locate it in any socially accredited idea of the human.

INDEED, Emerson comes perilously close at times to calling for the disappearance of that idea altogether. That is, Emerson sometimes pushes the oppositional nature of individual self-definition, which is everywhere implicit in his work, to the extremity reached in "Fate," where he tells us that "if truth come to our mind, we suddenly expand to its dimensions, as if we grew to worlds. . . . This insight throws us on the party and interest of the Universe, against all and sundry; against ourselves, as much as others." It is easy enough to imagine being "against ourselves" on behalf of something greater or more valuable to the future, as in the sacrifice of one's life for another, or for one's family, or for a cause. But this capacity is ours only because, in our Western mythologies of origin, we defined ourselves not on behalf of the Universe but in opposition to it, insofar as it is governed by something called "God" or the "flow" of nature. Our human beginnings were an abruption of that flow. Emerson seems willing now and again to forget this; so does Thoreau, especially in his *Journal*. Both hope that we really do still have a chance to rejoin the current of "life," a chance to start inventing ourselves afresh and all over again, as if we were part of a "perpetual inchoation." That phrase, from "The Method of Nature," stunningly summarizes what seems to Emerson the productive logic of life and, for that matter, of literature. Weakly translated, it means that form consists in acts of beginning, acts so continuous as to obliterate the boundaries of any one of them. "Perpetual inchoation" would also therefore have the unfortunate effect of obliterating us:

> The wholeness we admire in the order of the world is the result of infinite distributions. Its smoothness is the smoothness of the pitch of the cataract. Its permanence is a perpetual inchoation. Every natural fact is an emanation, and that from which it emanates is an emanation also, and from every emanation is a new emanation. If anything could stand still, it would be crushed and dissipated by the torrent it resisted, and if it were a mind, would be crazed; as insane persons are those who hold fast to one thought, and do not flow with the course of nature.

The confusion occurs near the end, in the equation of "mind" with some object that resists the torrential flow. This equation allows an inference that Emerson usually avoids because he finds it so dangerously seductive: that in order not to be crazed by holding on to a single thought, the mind must "flow with the course of nature." It must, for all practical purposes, disappear. And yet, as I have pointed out, nearly everywhere in Emerson the movement of mind from one idea to another is described not as a flow at all, but as an act, as a transition, and therefore as evidence of distinctly human will and power. Indeed, it is usually an antagonistic movement by which the mind counteracts its tendency toward inertia. "The mind goes antagonizing on." The mind is anything but submissive, and its contributions to the flow called life consist of resistances that help accelerate the forward motion.

WHAT Emerson wants to say here, at least consciously, is expressed in Frost's "West-Running Brook." The poem is a direct "emanation" from this passage of Emerson's, but it clarifies the passage and deserves to be called a "new emanation." It is among the most profound expressions ever given to the immensely intricate Emersonian linkages of origins, actions, and creativity:

> "Speaking of contraries, see how the brook
> In that white wave runs counter to itself.
> It is from that in water we were from
> Long, long before we were from any creature.
> Here we, in our impatience of the steps,
> Get back to the beginning of beginnings,
> The stream of everything that runs away.
> Some say existence like a Pirouot
> And Pirouette, forever in one place,
> Stands still and dances, but it runs away;
> It seriously, sadly, runs away
> To fill the abyss's void with emptiness.
> It flows beside us in this water brook,
> But it flows over us. It flows between us
> To separate us for a panic moment.
> It flows between us, over us, and *with* us.
> And it is time, strength, tone, light, life, and love—
> And even substance lapsing unsubstantial;
> The universal cataract of death
> That spends to nothingness—and unresisted,
> Save by some strange resistance in itself,
> Not just a swerving, but a throwing back,
> As if regret were in it and were sacred.
> It has this throwing backward on itself
> So that the fall of most of it is always
> Raising a little, sending up a little.
> Our life runs down in sending up the clock.
> The brook runs down in sending up our life.
> The sun runs down in sending up the brook.
> And there is something sending up the sun.
> It is this backward motion toward the source,
> Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in,
> The tribute of the current to the source.
> It is from this in nature we are from.
> It is most us."

It is important to notice that an Emersonian can belong to "the party and interest of the Universe" even "against ourselves" without subscribing to a First Cause or Prime Mover. In a characteristic locution Frost says only that "there is something sending up the sun"—only "something." This is philosophical skepticism of a very American kind, indistinguishable from the lilt of country talk. It is Frost's intention that the "truth" should exist exactly *there*, and not in Big Talk. The word "something" lurks inconspicuously in speech, a mystery on the tip of your tongue, on the very surfaces of your life. Looking intently into a well in obedience to the promise that truth is to be found at its bottom, Frost sees only

> . . . a something white, uncertain,
> Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.
> Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
> One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
> Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
> Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
> Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

Emersonians like to be at odds with those whom William James calls "intellectualists," people who prefer to think of truth as something already waiting to be discovered, something with a capital letter, not followed, as in Frost's poem, by a question mark. Intellectualists associate truth with depth, with some richness to be found there, an inference from the word "profound," which, besides its association with the word "fund," can

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mean "to fathom," as in *Moby-Dick*, where another kind of whiteness comes from the deep. The idea of "depths" is a fabrication of hidden riches. It can sometimes dissuade those who believe in it from coping effectively enough with the surfaces of life. "Intellectual tasting of life will not supersede muscular activity," Emerson insists in "Experience." "Life is not intellectual or critical, but sturdy."

HE PROCEEDS to a further disquisition on "surfaces," not having to do in this instance with the "smoothness" of nature, imagined as a flow of water, but with social-cultural life, imagined as some combination of skating pond and workplace:

> We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them. Under the oldest mouldiest conventions, a man of native force prospers just as well as in the newest world, and that by skill of handling and treatment. He can take hold anywhere. Life itself is a mixture of power and form, and will not bear the least excess of either.

It is impossible to come to terms with this passage; Emerson himself is unable to. It sounds exuberant, on the one hand, about the "man of native force," who can "take hold anywhere." But it admits, on the other, that all he has to cope with are "surfaces," that it makes no difference whether his situation is culturally encrusted or culturally bare. What strikes one here are not only his ideas of power, action, and resistance to constraint, but the undertone of lassitude, amounting to self-derision. About a quarter of "Experience," published in *Essays: Second Series* of 1844, can be traced to the *Journals* for 1842, and its ideas are familiar from "The American Scholar" of 1837 and from "Self-Reliance" and "Circles" in *Essays: First Series* of 1841. The changes in these few years are a matter not of Emerson's ideas but, as Frost would say, of the way he now carries himself toward them. It sounds as if his confidence in the efficacy of human "force" has become a source of irritation, as if he were discovering shallows in his own rhetoric.

The death of Waldo, and Emerson's skepticism about the reality of grief and the necessity of mourning, though obviously relevant to whatever he says in "Experience," are nearly always improperly magnified, in order to suggest that the essay marks a decisive turn in his life and work. But Emerson did not need the devastating loss of a son—preceded as it was by the deaths of his first wife, Ellen, at age 19 in 1831; of his often deranged brother Edward in 1834; and of his favorite brother, Charles, in 1836, a year before a devastating economic collapse—to make him wonder about his disengagements from others and from himself. This was a concern that began with his very first entries in the *Journals* of 1820, and a concern that he shared with Wordsworth, and with such childless figures as Thoreau and Whitman.

In *Essays: First Series*, he describes "intellect" the way he has already described the newborn infant in its crib: "Intellect is void of affection, and sees an object as it stands in the light of science, cool and disengaged. The intellect goes out of the individual, floats over his personality, and regards it as a fact, and not as *I* and *mine*." The "self" on which Emerson chooses to rely exists only in transitions. Identity is discernible to him in acts of antagonism directed against the already formulated, against one's own previous utterance—"against ourselves as much as others," as he says in "Fate." Such acts will prove to be in the interests of the Universe.

It is disconcerting to be taken at your word, and appalling when, having for so long insisted that you do not find yourself in your own body, you also find that the offspring of that body has in fact vanished into "the wholeness we admire in the order of the world." Keep in mind that Emerson means everything he says. Imagine a father and a writer who, having called for the disappearance of literary texts because they inhibit "original genius," must in addition be satisfied to lose the text originated by his married body, to lose it to the whim or the force of nature. What can he confidently leave to such a Universe as a trace of himself? The question is especially acute when he must count among the mere surfaces amid which we live the very words on which his rhetoric depends: "life," "power," "form," "convention," "nature." It may be, as he observes in "Plato," that intellect is superior to nature because it "made and maketh" it, but it can only do this because intellect is to begin with "interpenetrated by the mind that made nature," and us. How does one mourn deaths and disappearances from within a process that does not acknowledge them, including the loss of a child of whom Emerson wrote in his journal for June 1840, "My little boy grows thin in the hot summer and

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runs all to eyes and eyelashes"?

Even under less ruthless conditions, Emerson has great difficulty finding a rhetoric to support the positions he advances, positions having to do with the whole phenomenon of human (and literary) production. The passage about "surfaces" is a particularly vivid example of his difficulties. He cannot clearly locate the "surfaces" he alludes to, precisely because he intends that they should include, and therefore abolish, their defining opposite, which is the idea of "depth." You can both skate on his surfaces and handle them; you can be "in" them, "on" them, or "under" them. None of the verbs refers to an object, because all objects, including such words as "life," "power," and "form," are also surfaces only to be manipulated. The terms he confidently falls back on—skating, handling, holding—have to do entirely with actions.

William James will eventually turn the Emersonian dilemma into an exhortation on behalf of American pragmatism. Leading up to one of his famous references to the "cash-value" of words or ideas, he notes that

> the universe has always appeared to the natural mind as a kind of enigma, of which the key must be sought in the shape of some illuminating or power-bringing word or name. That word names the universe's *principle*, and to possess it is, after a fashion, to possess the universe itself. "God," "Matter," "Reason," "the Absolute," "Energy" are so many solving names. You can rest when you have them. You are at the end of your metaphysical quest.
>
> But if you follow the pragmatic method, you cannot look on any such word as closing your quest. You must bring out of each word its practical cash-value, set it at work within the stream of your experience. It appears less a solution, then, than as a program for more work, and more particularly as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be *changed*.

Emerson could not for long mourn the death of sons and lovers, of Waldo or of Ellen, because his work from the beginning had celebrated the fact that the Universe can afford to be indifferent to the human presence, even though the human presence enhances it. And Emerson is finally not on our side, but on the side of the Universe.

DÉJÀ JEW

The Counterlife
by Philip Roth

(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 324 pp., $18.95)

It is surprising that a novel this compelling should have emerged as a sequel from the shambles of Philip Roth's Zuckerman trilogy. Neither riding an obsession nor paying off scores against critics and editors is a very happy substitute for fictional invention; *Zuckerman Bound* ends up being the work of a mature talent determined, through sheer spite against the world, to reduce itself to embarrassing puerility. *The Counterlife* still exhibits certain vestiges of Roth's gnawing preoccupation with the hostility his fiction has provoked in the Jewish public—a concern that, 28 years after the publication of *Goodbye, Columbus*, is bound to be much more interesting to the author than to most of his readers. By and large, however, the new novel manages to put behind it Roth's fixation on reception, and instead to focus suggestively on the ambiguous transactions between fiction and life.

Although Roth has often written about writers and their quandaries, this is his first "self-reflexive" novel—that is, a novel that pointedly exposes its own condition as fictional artifice, and by so doing leads us to ponder the insoluble conundrums of fiction's relation to reality, fiction's claim to be a kind of reality. The story of novelist Nathan Zuckerman is picked up a few years after the events of *The Anatomy Lesson*, the last volume of the trilogy. The center of attention now is Nathan's tense relationship with his brother Henry, a successful dentist in South Orange, and hence the "good" Jewish son. In *The Anatomy Lesson*, the brothers had become estranged after Henry accused Nathan of causing their father's fatal coronary by exposing the family in his best-selling novel, *Carnovsky* (a transparent fictional stand-in for *Portnoy's Complaint*). Now, in the first of the five parts of *The Counterlife*, Henry is faced with the choice of undergoing life-threatening heart surgery or living on a medication that will keep him permanently impotent. In the fourth part of the novel, we realize that Nathan has actually projected his own fate onto Henry, just as he has invented a completely antithetical fate for Henry in the second part of the novel.

In effect *The Counterlife* has four different plots, two alternative destinies for each of the Zuckerman brothers, so that each lives a life both counter to the other and counter to himself. These alternatives correspond to the different parts, or five long chapters, of the novel, with the exception of the third part, which continues the fictional hypothesis of the previous chapter. The common denominators in this multiplication of fictional alternatives are the problematic Jewishness and the threatened sexuality of the protagonists. In each case, as readers of Philip Roth might expect, the crucial erotic attachment is exogamous, though it is Henry who falls prey to Portnoyan priapism, while Nathan is convinced he has at last discovered grand passion.

By the time we get to the fourth of the novel's five parts, we begin to wonder who exactly is inventing either of the Zuckermans, or the multiple selves of Zuckerman. For Nathan Zuckerman turns out to be the inventor of almost everything, but not quite everything, that seems to be "reality" in the book. The live, contentious Zuckerman of the concluding section, which is a supposedly posthumous piece of first-person writing, is finally more real than the Zuckerman who gives up the ghost in the preceding section. If both the novelist's brother and his wife (his fourth) eventually complain rather bitterly that he has reduced them to "just one of a series of fictive propositions," that he is "utterly unable to involve himself in anything not entirely of his own making," Zuckerman, who has the last word, responds by affirming the validity of the novelist's need to invent the world.

The very notion of a given self, Zuckerman proposes, is a kind of bad joke people allow to be foisted on them by coercive circumstances:

> What I have instead is a variety of impersonations I can do, and not only of myself—a troupe of players that I have inter-

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nalized, a permanent company of actors I can call upon when a self is required, an ever-evolving stock of pieces and parts that forms my repertoire.

This could be, the novel suggests, a questionable way of living, peculiar to the haunted theatricality of the novelistic imagination. But perhaps the world that others assume or construct is no more real.

ALL THIS MAY make *The Counterlife* sound like the later John Barth, or like Nabokov, with more realistic plausibility than the former and less pyrotechnic ingenuity than the latter. What is remarkable is that in being Roth's first self-reflexive novel, it is also his first Jewish novel. Jewish types abound, of course, in his previous fiction; and his exceptional attempt to escape from them to the American heartland in *When She Was Good* entailed a palpable loss in persuasiveness. But the middle-class, second-generation American Jews of northern New Jersey, with their characteristic family constellation, their attitudes and tics, are in these books the familiar social materials of an American realist. The fact that many American Jews squirmed when fixed by Roth's satiric eye may have often reflected an unwillingness to face the truth that the cultural landscape they inhabited was provincial and dreary, despite many apologetic claims to the contrary.

The Counterlife, on the other hand, is a Jewish novel in a more substantive sense. It uses the fictional medium to wrestle with the intractable question of Jewish identity (hence the appositeness of the theme of self-making). And this involves an imaginative confrontation within the fictional frame of clashing Jewish ideologies. Given the fact that so much of modern Jewish existence has been a renegotiation, under the pressure of crisis, of the basic terms of Jewishness, it is not surprising that a good deal of Yiddish and Hebrew writing has been fiction of this sort. (I would mention two often anthologized stories, Haim Grade's "My Quarrel with Hersh Rasseyner" in Yiddish, and Haim Hazaz's "The Sermon" in Hebrew, as exemplary instances of this urgent Jewish fiction of ideas.) Roth's resourcefulness in representing conflicting options, personal and political, for persistent or residual Jewish identity, is remarkable. It makes his new novel one of the best American examples—alongside Cynthia Ozick's novella "Envy, or Yiddish in America"—of the Jewish fiction of ideas.

This concentration of ideas is so intense that it leads Roth into the one entirely implausible episode of the novel. A tough Israeli security agent, in the midst of brutally apprehending a deranged would-be skyjacker who has drawn the hapless Zuckerman into his wake, delivers to Zuckerman a long harangue on Jewish history, on Jewish power and powerlessness, on the anti-Semitism of T. S. Eliot. It is a moment when the internal argument of the novel is pursued at the cost of verisimilitude. The bizarre introduction of T. S. Eliot by a knife-wielding counterterrorist points forward to the concluding section, "Christendom," in which Zuckerman's Jewish juices will begin to bubble in a series of unexpected encounters with British genteel anti-Semitism; and the equally improbable detail that the knife in question is a circumcision scalpel prepares for the very end of the novel, when Zuckerman proposes his own symbolic reinterpretation of circumcision.

ELSEWHERE IN the book, Roth is more successful in giving the clash of ideas a plausible human place and habitation. The most remarkable piece of writing in this regard occurs in the long second section, "Judea," in which Henry, the assimilated, affluent suburbanite, reacts to a postoperative depression by a precipitous return to the Jewish fold, a return that carries him all the way to a Gush Emunim settlement on the West Bank, where he changes his name to Hanoch and becomes the follower of a zealot rabbi. One measure of the difference between this novel and Roth's earlier work is the acuteness with which the Israeli scene, though represented only by a few fragments, is observed—in contrast to the Israel of *Portnoy's Complaint*, which is alternately a mirror for Portnoy's sexual neuroses and a tissue of stereotypes inherited from the New Jersey Jewish summer camps of the 1940s. Anyone who knows the country well should recognize in these words assigned to an Israeli liberal that Roth has got things just right:

> Every Jewish dilemma there ever was is encapsulated in this country. In Israel it's enough to live—you don't have to do anything else and you go to bed exhausted. Have you ever noticed that Jews shout? Even one ear is more than you need. Here everything is black and white, everybody is shouting, and everybody is always right.

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Very soon Nathan (who has flown in from London) and Henry will be vehement participants in the general shouting match. Their argument is essentially between a psychological and an ideological view of being a Jew. The former perspective is Nathan's and, no doubt, Roth's. But the trick of putting ideas on a collision course in fiction is to give a real voice, a real power of conviction, to both sides, and Roth does this brilliantly. Nathan shrewdly detects a root of filial rebellion in Henry's newfound nationalism:

> Wasn't what he described as a revolt against the grotesque contortions of the spirit suffered by the . . . exiled Jew more likely an extremely belated rebellion against the idea of manhood imposed upon a dutiful and acquiescent child by a dogmatic, superconventional father?

The same escape from origins that is attempted by Carnovsky-Portnoy in the eternal phallic pursuit of the blond shiksa is undertaken by Henry in trading *me* for *we* and packing a pistol in a desert landscape. The younger Zuckerman, on his part, puts his finger on the reductive effect of this very shrewdness, perhaps not canceling it but at least forcing us to think twice about it:

> Beyond all your profundities, beyond the Freudian lock you put on every single person's life, there is another world, a larger world, a world of ideology, of politics, of history—a world of things larger than the kitchen table! . . . All you see is escaping Momma, escaping Poppa—why don't you see what I've escaped *into*?

Nathan himself is by no means insensitive to the force of his brother's claim. During a Sabbath meal at the settlement, as he listens to the Hebrew chanting around the table, with the voice of Henry's charismatic rabbinical mentor rising above the rest, he reflects about his brother, "Whatever the tangle of motive in him, he certainly hasn't been drawn to nothing."

IT IS HARD to say precisely what happens in *The Counterlife* because it contains four different, mutually contradictory fictional hypotheses about two lives. Similarly, it is hard to say what is concluded ideologically because ideas and outlooks remain, as they should, in restless circulation. But the Zuckerman of the final section does resolve to resist all visions of a harmonious accommodation with reality—all "pastoral" prospects, as he calls them, whether in assimilation or in a Zionist normalization of Jewish existence. This resistance is itself a minimal Jewish credo.

Zuckerman chooses as its symbol the rite of circumcision. For him it confirms our banishment from the comforts of the womb, seals in the flesh the moral necessity to live in strife, bearing the scars inflicted by society and history. The concluding image of the novel is of Zuckerman's erect penis. This may sound Portnoyan, but it is not. What is stressed is not just resurgent virility, but the condition of circumcision, with all that it symbolically portends. In an odd but instructive conjunction, this conclusion might be read as a gloss on three lines from "Jews in the Land of Israel," one of Yehuda Amichai's most striking poems, lines that in turn gloss a phrase from Genesis 32:25, "when they were in pain": "The circumcision does it to us,/ as in the Bible, in the story of Shechem and the sons of Jacob,/ when we are in pain all our lives."

ROBERT ALTER

Robert Alter is the author most recently of *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (Basic Books).

WRONG ABOUT RIGHTS

The Uncertain Crusade: Jimmy Carter and the Dilemmas of Human Rights Policy
by Joshua Muravchik

(Hamilton Press, 247 pp., $18.95)

When should the United States intervene abroad, and for what ends? Should America attempt to contain the spread of communism worldwide? Should it attempt to impose democracy on repressive regimes? Or should Washington hew to a more traditional balance-of-power policy, one that aims only at containing the expansion of Soviet political power and military influence in regions that are genuinely vital to America's security?

These are difficult questions for a nation like ours to answer. Although America plays an imperial role in world politics, it is not a traditional empire. As Henry Fairlie has written, this simple fact poses a dilemma for the United States: "Of what beyond its boundaries can America say, 'That's mine'? What can it defend without having to find some moral, political, or intellectual 'reason' to defend it?" Because its imperial role is not universally accepted—abroad or at home—the United States must justify anew the legitimacy of its power every time it uses it beyond its borders.

The task of justification is especially difficult for the United States because its geostrategic circumstances have conferred upon it a high degree of security from external threat. (This remains intact in the nuclear age as long as the American deterrent remains credible.) Thus America's situation contrasts sharply with the experience of other great powers. For them, the geographical proximity of threatening rivals necessarily defined security as their overriding national purpose. But the United States, largely freed from the constraints of the balance of power, can define its own national interests and purposes in virtually any way it chooses. In practice, geographical serendipity, the absence of a strong tradition of realpolitik statecraft, and the myth of American exceptionalism have all combined to produce a foreign policy that is heavily ideological and often infused with missionary zeal.

Today America's ideological zeal is generally expressed in the rhetoric of human rights. This is chiefly the work of Jimmy Carter, and his human rights policy is the immediate subject of Joshua Muravchik's book. Muravchik, formerly executive director of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, trenchantly dissects the shortcomings of Carter's human rights policy. But his analysis, really, is a vehicle for articulating his own ideological presuppositions, which are close to what has become known as the Reagan Doctrine. *The Uncertain Crusade* is certainly one of the most important neoconservative foreign policy statements that have appeared to date.

Writing lucidly and with vigor—and

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mercifully without the stridency that mars so many neoconservative works—Muravchik presents the neoconservative answer to the dilemma of when, and for what purposes, America should intervene abroad. Human rights, it turns out, are at the core of the Reagan Doctrine, which seeks to roll back communism and promote democracy worldwide.

Reviewing the record, Muravchik criticizes the Carter administration for focusing most of its attention on individual human rights abuses while overlooking the systematic suppression of freedom in totalitarian regimes. As a result, he says, the Carter human rights team spent too much time worrying about the human rights situation in Latin America and Southern Africa and not enough time thinking about the total lack of liberty in the Soviet Union, China, and other Communist states. Moreover, Muravchik convincingly argues that the punitive sanctions imposed by Washington on human rights offenders (mostly right-wing American allies) were almost wholly ineffective. Muravchik pillories the Carter administration for applying its human rights standard inconsistently. The United States generally refrained from making human rights an issue in its relations with countries thought to be strategically vital; human rights was stressed only where the costs of such a policy to U.S. geopolitical interests were minimal. Drawing on lessons learned from Carter's mistakes, Muravchik urges that Washington adopt a sweeping, universalist policy of advancing democracy and human rights—and opposing totalitarianism—everywhere.

THE ZEST WITH which neoconservatives have embraced human rights is rather ironic. After all, during the campaign of 1980 Ronald Reagan's neoconservative supporters endorsed Jeane Kirkpatrick's now-famous distinction between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, excoriating Carter's human rights policy for naively ignoring the systemic suppression of freedom in Communist states and focusing instead on the human rights abuses of America's "authoritarian" allies. When the Reagan administration took office, it boldly declared its intention to break sharply with its predecessor's policies, to push human rights out of the foreign policy limelight.

But the Reagan administration quickly learned that human rights could not be so easily brushed aside. The human rights lobby and its liberal allies in Congress have been powerful enough to compel the administration to adjust its Central American and Southern African policies to take account of human rights concerns. And the administration has realized that by adopting human rights as its own policy it can turn the tables on its political rivals and seize the "moral high ground" in the foreign policy debate. Indeed, the rhetoric of human rights blends perfectly with the Reagan administration's depiction of world politics as a Manichean struggle between "democracy" and dictatorship—especially Communist dictatorships.

Of course human rights concerns properly play a role in the conduct of American foreign policy; such concerns express this country's deep commitment to its values. And obviously there is an undeniable ideological dimension to the Soviet-American competition. But, as the subtitle of Muravchik's book suggests, any American human rights policy is bound to run up against serious, perhaps insoluble, dilemmas.

The fundamental conundrum of human rights policy is easily understood. Unlike realpolitik, which is measured only in terms of its effectiveness in advancing traditional national security interests, human rights policies are properly judged on the basis of their principled, that is, their consistent, application. Absolute moral principles must be applied universally. They do not admit of compromise. Compromise invites the charge of hypocrisy, the most damaging criticism possible against a policy based on principle. Yet there is a simple reason why human rights policy cannot escape the censure of inconsistency, hypocrisy, and ineffectiveness: promotion of human rights is not the only—nor is it the most important—objective of American foreign policy. It is inevitable in the making of foreign policy that human rights concerns must often give way to the attainment of more immediately compelling, tangible goals. Moreover, although we may talk about human rights, the United States often lacks the leverage to compel other nations to correct their human rights abuses.

Nowhere is the conflict between human rights and other foreign policy objectives more dramatically illustrated than in Soviet-American relations. As Muravchik recounts, during his first months in office Carter redeemed his campaign pledge to denounce vigorously the suppression of human rights in the Soviet Union. The Soviet response was swift: strong diplomatic protests to Washington were accompanied by increased harassment of Soviet dissidents.

The rapid deterioration in U.S.-Soviet relations in early 1977 forced liberals—inside and outside the Carter administration—to realize that two of their most cherished policies, arms control and human rights, were at cross purposes. To be sure, Cyrus Vance's arms control mission to Moscow in March 1977 did not fail solely because of the fallout from Carter's human rights offensive; but the fact remains that the chill in superpower relations occasioned thereby contributed importantly to Vance's failure. Moreover, some administration officials responsible for Soviet affairs argued strongly that human rights should not be allowed to impinge on the more central political and military aspects of the superpower relationship. The Carter administration's decision to back away from its human rights criticisms of the Soviet Union understandably provoked questions about the consistency of its commitment, since its denunciations of right-wing American allies continued unabated.

NOTE TO SAPPHO

In an age when T-shirts are our libraries,
doing laundry is a literate job.

My daughter puts a clean one on
and her seventeen-year body is an open book.

But when she takes it off, on just another
virgin night, she says Mom it's hard

to sleep against my breasts. Agreed,
but I don't curse them. Sometimes I curse

the mattress springs, get up and read
you under the lamp. Or clear-imaged lines

of my former teacher, lesbian,
you would like. Otherwise, no birds

will sing for two more hours yet.
I hand-do the indecipherable lingerie—

cups that would strain wine!
Then lie down and dream your life

linked in bumpy sleep with mine.

SANDRA MCPHERSON

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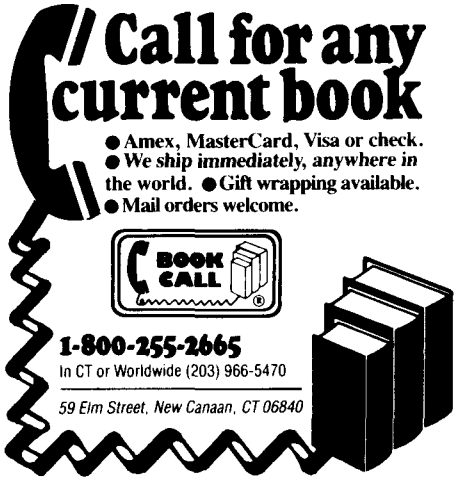
The Carter administration's experience was not unique. The Reagan administration also has learned that human rights concerns often must give way to the imperative of managing the critical political and military aspects of the Soviet-American conflict. Moreover, as did its predecessors, the current administration has learned the hard way that America can do little to alter fundamentally the human rights situation in the Soviet Union. Muravchik correctly points out that suppression of human rights and political freedom is the essence of the Soviet system. Now the United States can sometimes (though not always) alleviate the plight of individual Soviet dissidents; but short of triggering the collapse of the Soviet regime—an objective openly maintained by many neoconservatives—Washington cannot effect any real change in the human rights situation inside the Soviet Union. Cognizant of the danger of doing otherwise, realistic American foreign policy analysts have reluctantly learned to live with this truth. And in pondering the role of human rights in Soviet-American relations, it is well to recall that the greatest tangible results achieved to date by the United States were obtained by the quiet, realpolitik diplomacy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger.

Human rights policy is frequently criticized for its inconsistency. But there are several reasons why human rights policy is fated to be inconsistently applied, regardless of whether liberals or conservatives are in power in Washington. For a start, considerations of national security ensure that, barring a real crisis, the United States will press really hard on human rights only in countries that are of marginal strategic importance. That is why the United States tolerated Marcos for so long. It is why, despite Muravchik's strong criticism, the United States remains silent about the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China. Inconsistency is also inevitable because friendly regimes are, somewhat paradoxically, the most logical targets of American human rights policy. As Alan Tonelson has written, "A human rights policy involving deeds must fall most heavily on countries linked most closely to the United States," because those are precisely the nations over which the United States has leverage. Finally, consistency will inevitably prove elusive because human rights policies—as the South African case illustrates—often have more to do with the competing objectives of domestic political groups than with objective international political conditions.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THUS, THE MAJOR question that must be faced about human rights policy—Muravchik's neoconservative brand begs the question—is its practicality. Human rights policy reflects a quintessentially Wilsonian, a uniquely American, view of the world. It is a short and logical—though dangerous—step from believing in the myth of American exceptionalism to believing that the world would be a better place if only it had the good sense to adopt America's values. Neoconservatives openly proclaim their conviction that Washington must act on the premise that if democracy is good for the United States, it is good for everyone—or as George Quester put it, that "the four corners of the world would be happier places if they were governed in the same basically republican manner as Minnesota." Perhaps they would. Unfortunately, the rest of the world is not like Minnesota. Muravchik believes that there is nothing wrong with trying to "foist" Western ideals on others. But it seems hopelessly naive to believe that American political values can flourish in countries that have no indigenous democratic traditions, that lack the social, political, cultural, and economic institutions upon which the American democratic structure rests.

So the problem arises: What price are Americans prepared to pay to remake the world in this country's image? Any attempt to do so probably will prove costly and ultimately futile. In a world torn by political, social, and religious upheaval, in particular by the nationalisms and ethnic strife of the developing world, superpower meddling in the internal affairs of other nations is usually resented, and usually brings few benefits to the intervening power. Moreover, America has little power in most instances—it has neither carrots nor sticks—to shape the outcome of events. Imposing sanctions on repressive regimes like South Africa may be morally satisfying, but it is at best ineffective and at worst counterproductive.

Moreover, in those situations where America does have influence, its leverage tends to be negative rather than positive. Washington can occasionally pull the rug out from underneath a friendly dictatorship, but it seldom can do much to shape the successor regime's composition, or its policies. Of course, America's strictly strategic interests can be seriously compromised if Washington acts to prop up a toppling regime. But the Iranian and Sandinista revolutions remind American decision-makers that they must ask two questions in framing human rights policy: First, how bad are things under the present regime? And, more importantly, are things likely to be better or worse under its successor? It has become fashionable to cite the Philippines as proof that we can intervene effectively to impose democracy in the Third World. We should not be seduced, however, by our apparent success there. In many ways, the Philippines is sui generis. America's historical involvement there—and the resulting political, cultural, and linguistic ties between the elites of both countries—gave Washington a unique degree of leverage that cannot be duplicated elsewhere. And anyway it is far from certain what the outcome of American policy in the Philippines—what the outcome of the revolution there—will be.

WHY SHOULD AMERICA become involved in the internal affairs of nations that, at best, have only a peripheral connection to its national security? And in an era of worsening American overextension, can it afford the cost of involving itself in the Third World? It is on these questions that the battle lines are drawn between Muravchik and his pro-Reagan Doctrine cohorts, and those who believe that America's foreign policy should be more restrained. Aside from Central America, and possibly the Persian Gulf, there are few areas in the Third World where America's political, strategic, or economic interests compel its involvement. Americans have rightfully—and painfully—learned to be wary when their leaders summon them

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to an ideological crusade to "make the world safe for democracy." The Reagan Doctrine's dangers are exacerbated, not mitigated, by its idealism. It was, after all, an excess of idealism, not its absence, that led the United States into Vietnam.

Advocating a foreign policy that is more realistic and restrained than the neoconservatives' does not mean denigrating the role of ideals in America's world political role. Ideals are as much a part of reality as power. At its best, American foreign policy has always been an admixture of realism and idealism—but an admixture, not a mixture of equal parts. Ideals must support interests. To allow ideology to determine American interests is to put the proverbial cart before the horse. Thinking about foreign policy in primarily ideological terms inhibits the understanding of world politics in terms of its enduring constants, the balance of power and national interest. In their obsession with ideology, the neoconservatives have overlooked the distinction between what is vital and what is merely desirable. Sensible Americans know that our foreign policy must reflect an appreciation of both the possibilities and the limits of power, that it must be based on a balance between resources and commitments. The Reagan Doctrine lacks this sense of proportion. The world is not infinitely malleable. And even superpowers are not omnipotent. It is far beyond America's power to impose order on a recalcitrant world, much less to bring American-style democracy to it. If we try—if we adopt the foreign policy prescription advocated by Muravchik's book—we shall exhaust and overextend ourselves, and damage the fabric of our society.

CHRISTOPHER LAYNE

Christopher Layne, a Los Angeles attorney, has consulted for the National Security Council and written about foreign affairs for *Foreign Policy*, the *Los Angeles Times*, THE NEW REPUBLIC, and other publications.

LOVE BYTES

Roger's Version
by John Updike

(Knopf, 329 pp., $17.95)

How clever John Updike is! And how vulgar he can be. That the two qualities manage to coexist, each in so high (or low) a degree, in the same writer, in the same book, passes understanding.

His new novel has it wholeheartedly both ways, being about God and Sex. The initial God material is promising, and to some extent delivers what it promises, as did *The Witches of Eastwick* in that novel's dealings with demonology. Roger Lambert, a professor in the School of Divinity at an unnamed university, is visited by 28-year-old Dale Kohler, an earnest computer operator who believes that at last "God is showing through," paradoxically via the discoveries of scientists. Total energy and the expansion rate of the Big Bang, he reasons, had to be in a precise ratio; a fraction off on one side or the other and either the universe would have collapsed long ago or else it would never have taken shape. The argument is developed, ingeniously and (to the lay mind) with fair persuasiveness. The odds are overwhelmingly against blind chance; ergo, there must have been a Maker.

"Whenever theology touches science, it gets burned." Roger would rather be left in peace to unravel the quaint disputations of ancient heretics. He regards Dale's project—the pinpointing of God with the aid of computers—as repulsive both aesthetically, because it assumes that God can be intellectually trapped, and ethically, because it eliminates faith and the freedom to believe or disbelieve. We have some sympathy with his attitude. How would critics feel if computers came up with a definitive and foolproof method of establishing the value of a novel or a painting? Roger is a Barthian: God must remain *totaliter aliter*, wholly "on the other side of the humanly understandable." Or, as we have long grown used to hearing, he moves in a mysterious way. All the same, there is something fishy about those clerics and divines, now in the clear majority, who edge nervously away from any reference to such aesthetically displeasing and socially embarrassing topics as God, the Devil, Heaven, Hell. As for freedom of choice—given the state of the world, isn't it time God manifested himself a little more plainly, even at the expense of freedom?

UNHAPPILY, DALE grows tedious with his incessant lecturing, and Roger soon has the edge on him by virtue of the wit and perspicacity inherited from his own maker. Roger deems the Bible "a very badly edited anthology," and defines his role in "the religion business" as having to do with quality control, not distribution. And he notes that his young opponent shows himself to be distinctly un-Christian by exulting over what he sees as the squirmings of atheist scientists. As narrator, Roger has access to such Updikean delights and sights as the shop, called ADULT PASTRIES, that stocks "Erotic Cakes and Droll Candies"; and it seems a case of unearned acumen and elegance of expression when the author licenses him to muse on the city's immigrant, mainly Vietnamese district:

> We had dabbled overseas and in extracting ourselves had pulled up these immigrants like paint on a stirring stick. There was something about them distasteful and erotic, these remnants of an old adventure, yet something grand also in the global mixingness, the living anthropology of so many tints of skin jostling here, on this tough thoroughfare, the world's people partaking of and amplifying the energy of our American shopfronts and tenements, our cinder yards and body shops.

But then Sex rears its hoary head, moving in ways far too explicit (as they say) to allow for much mystery. (Nor do the tacked-on poetical bits help in this respect.) Roger has told us how he finds in pornography a comfort and inspiration akin to that supplied by the reading of theology. Seemingly inspired by Tertullian's views respecting the soul's dependence on the agency of the flesh ("Dear Flesh: Do come to the party. Signed, your pal, the Soul"), he imagines in sharp, sweaty detail the red-hot lovemaking between his discontented wife, Esther, and pimpled, potent Dale—this being a device that enables the narrator to report "actual" events to which he clearly couldn't be a witness—while himself conducting a lecherous, halfhearted affair with his teenage dropout

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niece, a "common-minded delinquent girl" (as he calls her in a sober moment) lumbered with a fatherless black baby. Baby Paula, incidentally, is the book's most appealing presence; also the least loquacious.

No doubt the flesh is—as Thomas Mann's Devil said of music—"a highly theological business," but this carrying-on about tits and pricks and cunts ("if I may risk offending modesty in my desire to speak the truth," as Roger says, rather late in the day) is a sad comedown after the intellectual excitements of the earlier stages. Dale's computer program, DEUS, is at least not banal; however unproductive, it signifies something.

AS WE would expect, there are fine passages here, the kind of writing that only Updike can produce: evocations of streets wide and narrow, houses and trees and skies, the atmosphere of an underground garage, the views from a revolving restaurant. The walk-on characters are often brilliant: Ed Nea, a specialist in Bultmannism and holocaustics and a nominal Presbyterian, is "the Marrying Sam of Godless weddings."

> When the Czech-émigré astrophysicist's daughter marries a Japanese Buddhist graduate student in semantics, it is Ed who tailors the rite to their exact shade of polite disbelief, silently rolling his eyes upward when a single spoken word of Heavenly appeal would be too much.

An impressive knowledgeableness pervades the book, though there is rather too much about computers, as if the author had swallowed a handbook on the subject. And, naturally, witty asides and telling insights abound. Thinking of how a mention of the bathroom he shares with Esther must have wounded Dale, the narrator reflects that "when you venture into adultery you must expect to trip over the husband's dental floss." This says more about such liaisons than do all the blow-by-blow couplings and the contingent feelings and velleities.

Roger has plausible reasons for preferring a *Deus absconditus*, and shabby ones too. He makes a living out of absence. A present God, whether "hauled kicking and screaming out from some laboratory closet," as he puts it, or "breaking through," as Dale has it, wouldn't be good either for business or for pleasure. Roger rather enjoys seeing himself as a sort of heretic, but for him heresies are no more than complicated crossword puzzles. He is not a heretic so much as a fairly ordinary if more than ordinarily erudite hypocrite. I doubt either Karl Barth or Tertullian would have liked this book. Yet it ends on a disarmingly apt note. It is Sunday and Esther is about to go out, to church she says. "Why would you do a ridiculous thing like that?" asks Roger. "Oh," she replies. "To annoy you." Good for her!

D. J. ENRIGHT

D. J. Enright's *The Alluring Problem: An Essay on Irony* will be published by Oxford University Press next month.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

add that the staffer was "referring to a neighborhood restaurant that's cheap."

Mary N. Webster (reputed to be Noah's 17th cousin, thrice removed), who dines here now and again, says Noah defines "cheap" as "tawdry," among other things. She says were he to drop in today he'd define The Exchange as "inexpensive," "worth more than the price," "neighborly—as you can get being only 300 feet from the White House."

Next time Kondracke drops by The Exchange, he can have an inexpensive lunch on me. But if it will make him feel better, I'll charge double our usual price.

JOHN PELGER
Manager, The Exchange, Ltd.
Washington, D.C.

THATCHER'S FELLOW TRAVELER

To the editors:

I am surprised to find myself typecast by Andrew Sullivan as an enemy of Mrs. Thatcher ("Thatcher's Fellow Travelers," December 22). Nothing could be further from the truth. I am a warm supporter of her government, shall vote for it at the next election, and hope that it will win the next election handsomely. If Mr. Sullivan had any understanding of the broad central nature of my political opinions, he would not have written as he did.

MAURICE COWLING
Peterhouse, Cambridge, England

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be held to under 200 words. Letters may be edited for space. Please address letters to: Correspondence, TNR, 1220 19th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

TRB, *from page 4*

trate. Nevertheless, it took far less than the prospect of a hanging to "concentrate the mind" in 1986. American minds were concentrated 62 times last year, to be exact. The main subject concentrating minds was the prospect of a corporate takeover. The prospect of a superpower summit came in second. Sometimes, indeed, it appeared hard to avoid concentration. A no-layoff policy was said to concentrate the minds of management at one company, while unemployment was said to concentrate the minds of workers. On different occasions both the automatic budget-slicing provisions of the Gramm-Rudman law and the possibility that this law might be overturned were held to concentrate the minds of Congress. I myself see no sign of this.

Finally, though, the matter weighing heaviest on everyone's mind is: How will we know when it's over? This vital question was raised 85 times in 1986. In the majority of cases, thoughtful observers concluded that it's "not over until it's over." On 13 occasions (15 percent), they offered the view that it's "not over until the fat lady sings." The remainder were mostly variations: it's not over until "the final second," until "I blow my whistle" (megalomaniac referee), until "the candidate sings" (losing California Senate hopeful Ed Zschau), until "the sixth inning" (Taiwanese manager of the world-champion little league team). It was a year of subtle distinctions. "Unlike baseball, which gave birth to 'It's not over till it's over,' football is often over long before it's over," observed the *New York Times*. And, according to the *L.A. Times*, "Whereas in basketball it's not over until the fat lady sings, in horse racing it's not over until the videotapes are reviewed."

When you consider how much is certain, it's amazing how little is over. Apart from sports events, the matters most frequently not over until they were over were tax reform and arms control negotiations. President Reagan himself noted that tax reform would be over when it was over. On other subjects, though, his resort to the familiar formula was less helpful. Importuned by reporters in the early days of Iranamok, he replied: "I never talk about a no-hitter until it's over." ("He did not elaborate," the story noted dryly.) Yes, Mr. President, but how will we *know* when it's over? Well, one thing is certain: it's not over yet.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Naughty, Naughty

TODAY'S YOUTH have it rough. Everything, they are constantly told, is a moral issue: drugs, sex, drinking, pornography. Kids are supposed to make their parents nervous by doing the opposite of what they're told. But how can you enjoy a little harmless naughtiness with Nancy Reagan, William Bennett, Jerry Falwell, and Ed Meese hanging over your shoulder and branding you an immoralist? I recently got singed for what I thought was a fairly academic article in TNR attributing America's "drug crisis" to media hype. I thought readers would understand that I didn't actually *favor* drug abuse. How callow of me. My presumed immorality became my calling card. When my next-door neighbor asked me what I did for a living, I showed him my drug-hype article. "Really good writing," he said the next day. "Do you know where I could buy some pot?"

BUT DRUGS ARE last year's issue. Thanks to the National Research Council's new report, *Risking the Future: Adolescent Sexuality, Pregnancy and Childbearing,* teen sex will be this year's hot moral topic. Secretary of Education William Bennett has already thoughtfully labeled the report (which advocates that teenagers have increased access to contraceptives and abortion) "dumb." Still, teen sex and pregnancy are at the heart of the moral v. naughty debate. The moral types have the unrealistic goal of eliminating both. The naughty ones ask, more pragmatically: "How do we encourage the former and discourage the latter?"

OF COURSE, propositions like that have given the naughty a bad name in the '80s. Just because we advocate sex doesn't mean that we advocate sex without contraception, and therefore favor teen pregnancy. Isn't it obvious that people can have sex without risking pregnancy or even disease? What about kissing? You think I'm kidding, but the naughty are pro-family and opposed to any act (sexual or otherwise) not taken with the proper precautions between people mature enough to have at least a general idea of what they are doing. That's what we believe—really. What we actually do in bedrooms, backseats, and especially on the beach during the summer may bend our principles just a little, but remember: it is the creative child who colors outside the lines.

LIKE ANY IMPORTANT social issue, the moral v. naughty debate is being played out in newspapers nationwide in the section that encourages the airing of divergent opinions: the comics. In *Kudzu* Doug Marlette has been poking fun at the moralists via a character named Jerry Fallout, leader of the "Legion of Just Plain Folks" and producer of the anti-libido film, *Harvest of Hormones*. When Nasal T. Lardbottom was convicted of "having hormones" and condemned by Fallout to wear over his head a paper bag emblazoned with an "H," Kudzu declared with relief, "There but for the grace of glands go I." But hormones, as the January 12 *Newsweek* cover story tells us, are more than an adolescent joke. They are real science. Once the Gn-RH is released to the hypothalamus and the pituitary starts releasing LH and FSH—I mean—it's like, it's not your fault anymore, y'know?

IN THE INTEREST of equal time, the *Washington Post* also features the teen advice column "Ask Beth" on its comic pages. Here Dear Abby imitator Beth Winship dispenses mostly moral solutions to the pressing problems of the hormone set. One teen confusenik, using the nom de plume "Fed Up," writes: "I'm 17 and live with my overprotective grandparents. They won't let me date, go out with my friends, or even drive to town. What should I do?" Beth's answer: "Ask them what they are specifically worried about. . . . Once you understand their concerns, you can try to work out solutions. . . ." My answer: Wait until they're asleep, climb out the window, slide down the drainpipe, meet your friends down the block, drive to town, and have a large time. If you get caught, lie. If you get caught in the lie, admit it. This will work to your advantage because your grandparents will probably say, "It's not what you did that disturbs us, it's the fact that you lied about it." You might get grounded for a month. But after you've served your sentence you can use what they said when they grounded you against them.

ONCE "FED UP" is freed from house arrest, he or she will find plenty of opportunity to join those of us who are living the naughty life and loving it. "Fed Up" might go cruising with my roommate, Bob. He was sitting alone in a Georgetown bar when a young woman sat next to him and initiated a conversation. Several hours later, Bob asked if she would be his date for a party he was obligated to attend. "I'd love to," she responded, "but I think I should tell you that I'm only 17." "That doesn't matter," Bob responded. "I don't go by age, I go by weight."

ALL THE BEST comedians have been naughty, and nobody would want it any other way. Take Groucho Marx. Returning from London with a Dunhill watch and lighter, he decided to avoid paying the tariff. On his Declaration of Purchases form, Groucho filled out the following: "Under 'Born,' he wrote *yes*; in the 'Hair' classification Marx wrote *not much*; his 'Occupation' he listed as *smuggler*; and on the 'Purchases' line: *Wouldn't you like to know?* As Mr. and Mrs. Marx approached the customs counter, he stage-whispered to her: 'Where is the opium? Is it still in your girdle?' Thus alerted, the customs officers took the culprits to their offices where they were thoroughly searched for illegal drugs. The gold Dunhill lighter and watch were thereafter of no interest whatever to the customs officials. . . ." Note that the foregoing naughty anecdote is in quotes. From where? The current issue of *Conservative Digest*, of course.

YUPPIES, MEANWHILE, aren't known for their sense of humor and are generally too busy trading on inside information and shopping at Paul Stuart to have sex. A recent cover story of the *Washingtonian* even implied that they are going to church without anyone forcing them. That may be true, but I recently visited the only real yuppie couple I know, and observed them in their natural habitat: a brownstone on the Upper West Side. They were munching microwave popcorn and watching George Lucas's naughty classic, *American Graffiti*, on their VCR. It was Saturday night: Did they want to go out dancing when the movie was over? "No thanks. We're watching *Rebel Without a Cause* after this. Have you seen it?" "Seen it?" I answered on my way out the door. "I lived it."

A. P. W.

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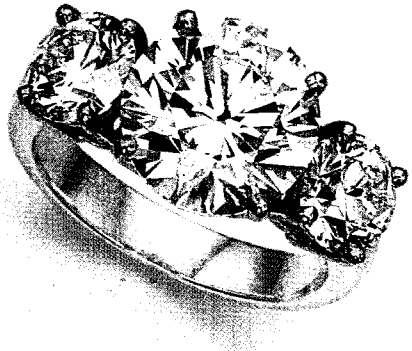

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